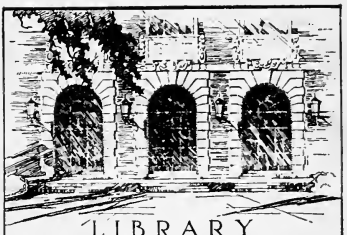

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RUMOUR.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"CHARLES AUCHESTER," "COUNTERPARTS,"

&c. &c.

"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad Rumour lies:
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove
As He pronounces lastly, on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heaven, expect thy meed."

LYCIDAS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
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v. 2

RUMOUR.

CHAPTER I.

There is perhaps no kind of suffering so intense, because none so palpable and real, as a reaction of illness purely physical, after excessive mental excitement. Geraldine found this. After her attack, whose danger she apprehended as little as she fully appreciated its discomfort, she ceased to find it interesting to be ill, for before it she had esteemed herself ill, and self-interest had been even a romantic alleviation of her distress. However, her long reply to Geraldi's last letter was the last of her intellectual exertions; after that was written and dispatched, she sank down utterly as she would have done

before, but for the exigent demand upon her sympathy of his woeful and wild appeal. She came down stairs no more; and though she did not confess *how* she had suffered, she denied no longer her suffering to her husband, or rather she confessed to confusion of mind, and to nerves which would not respond to what social routine imposed upon them. He, too happy to see her calm again, for the calm of exhaustion chased the hectic from her cheek and the fire from her eye, rested ever by her side; for a little while again she nestled to his heart, and if not ecstasy, certainly a transient peace possessed him. It may well be wondered at why he sought for her no medical advice. But there was for him this large excuse—one founded too upon the experience of a life more than twice as long, and to the full as vital as her own—that he had consulted on his own account almost every European doctor with never-failing unsuccess. And, except for exact symptoms of actual disease, he had lost whatever confidence his youth might have confessed to in any European doctor whatsoever.

Could he have carried Geraldine on that famed square of carpet bought by Prince Houssain, to the lap of the Arabian Desert, or the heart of

the city of Damascus, he would have called to her side the fathers of traditional pharmacy who preserve it pure as at its source, or the physician whose sage glance is knowledge, whose magnetic touch is life. But this England! It must be told that Albany, though he bore transplantation as well as any other exotic which is carefully conserved with all due appliances of artificial heat and screening from the air; yet was no more the Albany he would have been had his forefathers never left their native orient, than that rose of the London Pantheon, over whose poverty of scent the Persian Prince wept a few short summers since, was the same rose which in his divine native air throws up a perfume which might pierce the region of the sun which wooed it forth, and one of whose tears distilled and sealed in crystal will sweeten a drawer for a quarter of a century. And this England, Albany despised and hated—yes, hated, though he hated neither living man nor woman, nor insect, nor reptile in it. No doctor, no schoolman, no physiologist has ever dwelt sufficiently upon the consequence of climate. Yet a change from a climate to which one has been, not *born* perhaps, but assimilated by hundreds of ancestral births;

a change from such climate to one its contrary—from the South Australian tot he Hyperborean—from the Syrian to the Saxon, must work ruthless evil; the heart will chill till its natural charities are frosted over, the brain will partially collapse, its action ever in extremes. Therefore did the change from a natural to an artificial climate and condition render Albany unjust, more especially as his intellect, transcending all others round him, lifted him out of the mists of conventionalism, and showed him man rather as he *is*, than as he *would* be: for many and many an erring soul and feeble mind aspires and longs to be that it is not, yet *will* be, *shall* be, as surely as there is truth in God, and as the heavens are higher than the earth.

But this is little to the purpose, except as it concerns Geraldine. She was now—while her husband believed her in a fair way to recover at rest, all the beauty of perfect health—very nearly at the point to die. She knew it not herself, had she known she would probably have cared little; for it is a fact that the happiest-lived, if pure, dread death no more than sleep, and to them it seems to come as naturally and unexpectedly. However, the disease which had

entered at an avenue so minute, that only she herself had perceived it, not knowing it as a disease, gained ground rapidly as it only does in exceptional cases; it kept secret its preparations as a volcano, and as silently and mildly smouldered. That which was to be death to Geraldine's baby-happiness, her baby-fame, was to let her free to find the discipline which should alone develope her womanhood. But for what happened, she would have died "an infant," in years as well as knowledge.

It was the second day Geraldine had remained upstairs, not always lying down, for that oppressed her more, though she made so light of the oppression that she did not mention it to Diamid. But she rested on his arm, she kissed him, was quiet to be kissed herself, played with flowers and arranged them, felt, oh, how glad! that she had no book to write. She determined to forget Helen Jordan, the scene on the terrace, Diamid's words, even her repetition of all to Geraldi; in short, she was in that most exquisite but most dangerous mood of her temperament —life was ebbing softly, like little melting waves of a receding tide. She ate as little as usual, for she, with her Italian frugality, entirely sym-

pathised with Diamid's oriental temperance, and the latter prevented him from perceiving that in reality she needed more and more nourishing food than she had ever required in her life.

The siesta of sickness! when after the long weary morning the afternoon drops heavy on the lids, needful sleep, from which the sick one wakes again to weariness, for through the mist that wrapped the half-closed brain, uneasy visions rise like ghosts, and the torpid heart cannot stir enough to scatter them! How unlike the siesta of the southern beauty, from whose sweet rest or sweeter dreams she springs with dewy warmth upon her brow; or the noon-slumber of the tender growing babe, from which it stretches to its home of milken promise. So, weary was Geraldine when she fell asleep, wearier in her dreams, though they were not awful—she was yet herself, and her memories were yet too young. Her husband watching by her, steadied his thoughts by a strong effort of volition, fearing magnetically to excite her; indeed, tried not to think of her at all, but mused on the political conditions which were to her an unknown world, in which he, half his time, was forced to exist. So, as it often happens in illness, when one is not

actually in the grasping power of pain, Geraldine dreamed of her childhood, her youngest girlhood, and of Geraldi. Wearily she wandered in old places, where he had always been,—strangely enough, she could not find them there. And now, in her sleep, half-consciously she wanted him—sick persons of her temperament always desire the presence not so much of the person they love the best, as that of the person they love the best of *their own blood.* Most long after their mothers—Geraldine was to her mother half a stranger—but she had grown up with Geraldi and knew him better than all the world. Not that she could have endured the loss of her husband's society and strong supporting solicitude, but she required Geraldi's as well.

Now Diamid, though he possessed the power of being jealous, which all the most loving natures own, was too sagacious ever to suspect cause for it where none existed, and too generous to be angry with those who were jealous of him. So when Geraldine awoke and said "I have been dreaming about Geraldi; I thought I was at home, I mean in Italy, and that I could not find him there. I am afraid he is ill, for I have not heard from him to-day,"

Albany only thought of saving her distress and suspense. "Nothing is easier," he said, "than to hear to-night before bed-time, and then you will sleep more tranquilly. Geraldi is sure to be at home, for he knows no one in London, or near it. I will carry a message to the nearest telegraph office, and wait for the reply myself, as I shall send it in Italian, it will be the most secure plan."

"You are too good, too kind," said Geraldine, "and will you say that I have been rather ill, but am much better now?"

Diamid carried the words in his mind, as those of a nervous person whose nerves are weakened by excitement, nothing more. The telegraph office was four miles off. Albany drove there in his brougham. It was close to the station, and after delivering the message he walked to the platform till it was possible for the reply to return. The afternoon express was due, the bell rang, the throbs and thunder of the train approached, it stopped. One person got out of a second-class carriage—Geraldi. He did not look ill, not paler nor more sullen than usual, but more resolute. Albany, delighted for the first time to behold him, ran up to him, holding

out his hand—"Why, Geraldi! I had just sent a message to town after you; my wife was fretting because she had not heard this morning from her brother—she is a little tired, but you will do her more good than anything or anybody. Let us go directly. Give Lawrence your carpet-bag."

"No, I thank you, Mr. Albany," answered Geraldi, in the tone of a second in a duel, for the "my wife," and the "brother," added insult to injury in his esteem. "No, I thank you, I shall be at Hope Park but a quarter of an hour after you, and you can prepare Geraldine, lest my sudden coming should alarm her. I was certain, from the tone of her last letter, that she was ill." So Geraldi stepped into a railway fly, to which was harnessed one of those half-anatomies of horses, which make one wonder whether all the respectable horses were sent to clover in the Elysian fields, upon the abolition of mail-coaches. Albany said no more, but stepped into his brougham and drove off; for the first time his sweet temper, "sore" as it was "with tenderness," was ruffled by the boy's behaviour—what right had he to speak of the "tone" of her letter, and above all, what complaints had she made? How could she seek for sympathy any-

where but in his heart, which ached with its excess, and with the excess of love, if of happiness no longer. Yet so unselfish was he, that when on telling her of his meeting with Geraldi, Geraldine smiled, he was really glad and thankful the boy had come.

"I shall leave you with him," said he, finally, "while I go down to dinner, for I know Geraldi never will dine late, and perhaps *he* will persuade you to eat more than I could yesterday."

Just as the dressing-bell rang, Geraldine's maid knocked, and being called in, announced that a young gentleman wished to see her. She directed that he should be shown up, saying in an aside to Diamid, "It is my cousin"—lest the maid should not show him proper respect.

And Diamid retreated into his dressing-room and closed the door, not sorry to escape the sight of their first embrace—not because he was jealous, but it would have made him sad.

Geraldi entered—not rushing in—the consciousness of his errand made him feel manlier than even before, if not with an honourable manhood: though, to do him justice, he really was too selfishly absorbed not to think himself the most unselfish and honourable of men. Geraldine

threw her arms innocently round him, but he felt how feeble was their pressure; in an instant he felt sure she was ill. He saw the difference in her since their short separation; he recollected on a sudden that when they were leaving Italy, just after her marriage, her grandmother had said with a half-ominous shake of her head, "If England does not suit her health, which is all I fear, you must send her back to me." And Diamid had exultantly nodded, so radiant at that moment had been Geraldine's bloom.

"Oh, to get her back to Italy," thought the boy; "*then* if I told her, she would never come back to him again. But there would be none to bear me witness, as there is *here*, perhaps she would not believe it—not because she really cares for him, but because she is so proud. She shall hear it—I must tell her; oh! will she believe it?" He stooped to her ear, and whispered, while Geraldine still softly clasped him.

"Where is Mr. Albany, angela *mia?*"

"He is gone down to dinner."

"What! he left you *alone?* how cold, how cruel!"

"Hush, Geraldi, he went down on purpose that you and I might be alone together—he said

you would do me good, and so you will; now tell me everything that has happened to you, since yesterday. And I will tell you—"

"No, let me speak first," said Geraldi, in a voice singularly clear and calm for him.

"What can you have to tell me?" Geraldine thought of her poor book, the embers of her author's pride flashed out a gleam, its fire was not yet spent. He had heard something triumphant—he had come on purpose, there could be no other reason. "What have I to say? Oh, Geraldine, listen, listen! At last you will know me, know all I have endured for you, and will thank me for the truth, for you are a Geraldi, brave as well as proud."

He flung himself on his knees: a false heroism, a false enthusiasm, filled and fired him—there was excuse for him, as there is for most who err and for some who fall, but woe for the consequences of selfishness; woe for him who shall offend one of those little ones, whose inexperience and want of discipline have too long kept them children. Geraldi was no child, but a most precocious youth; he knew more than she did, though he was not more wise. A sickening suspicion of some evil unknown, more terrible than

any comprehended, seized Geraldine. Had Geraldi known the precise character of her illness, it is but justice to say that, while he would have moved heaven and earth to get her back to Italy, he would have left unsaid every syllable of the words which were burning up from his heart. But Geraldine could not speak except in a low quiet whisper, to entreat him to tell her all he meant, at once; she felt that long suspense would bring on just what had befallen her when Helen Jordan shocked her. The soft flutter of her heart began again, its small pulse beat countlessly fast, but Geraldi knew it not, he thought her calmer and stronger for his presence. He put one arm round her as she sat nearly upright against the high-piled sofa-cushions; but he turned his head away with an instinct he *ought* to have attended to—he did not wish to see the expression of her face while he spoke. He told all, feeling as though his own secret were worthless, having discovered the value of *another's*; he related his struggles long past, his resolve to depend no longer even upon her, and his decision to go upon the stage. Every minute incident of visits to the attic of the artist, their habits when together, their conversations in which sometimes

mingled Lady Delucy's name. The only departure, if not from truth, from fact, was that when Geraldi came to the point, his confession of his own misery, and Geraldine's supposed wrongs, he swerved from the actual recollection. Instead of saying that Rodomant was playing when he spoke, and that after all he had but remarked dreamily, "It was not because *she* did not love him," naming no one; instead of recalling his own inventions, which elicited the inwardly addressed complaint of Rodomant, Geraldi made an ungenuine statement — that the artist had assured him, in so many words, that Diamid loved Lady Delucy, and had made to her a proposal of marriage, which she refused.

Had Geraldi possessed one spark of Geraldine's poetic fire, it would have warmed his words, but like his determined mind—not his glowing heart—they were steady, and stern, and cold. So they fell on Geraldine's heart like ice-bolts, shattering, crushing down into her inmost being, her last remains of the vital innocence of youth. Had his words been burningly eloquent as they were boldly strong, they might have melted on her ear, fusing themselves into the radiant imagery that ever enwrapt her thoughts.

Then might the powers of her intellect, challenged to prove the truth, have sprung vigorous from their sick inertia, have wrestled successfully with the falsehood, wrung from it its sting, and left it vanquished, because unarmed, harmless as a non-existent enemy, a proven lie. But Geraldi, by the instinct of selfish passion, which imparts the power to discriminate between the best means and inferior ones, knew perfectly well that no raving would convict her—he had raved too often and unsuccessfully; and he avoided the grounds of his own interest and love with equal tact. If it be a fact that the condition of bodily illness is a torturing one, because unnatural—a departure from pure and perfect physical laws—it is also true, that in illness we cannot reason, though reflection is even more spontaneous than in health. The memory weakens, while receptivity of fresh impressions is morbidly intense. Geraldine, therefore, questioned not, but contemplated this projected fact with vivid fearfulness, the valley of death's shadow held no horror more monstrous yet impending, for the soul-sick pilgrim. Nor had she strength left to fly from the temptation of terror, as terrible as that of sin. And so all the love and tenderness ineffable

of her husband's invariable behaviour, her destiny crowned with a devotion for which she owed at least as much gratitude to heaven as to man, were as it were lost upon her; of them her remembrance darkened, deadened, as the starry heaven beneath which drops and spreads a universal cloud. But though she sinned this time through suffering, there was suffering as hers, and more sharply to be felt, for him who erred the most. As Geraldi ended the story which his miserable jealousy had perverted, he expected a burst of that old indignation for which Geraldine, even as a child, had been remarkable; no inward and still disdain, but an exaggerated and eloquent defiance. Geraldi had most admired her in these moods, they had brought her the nearest to himself. No sigh troubled the air, no breathing quickened into passionate or plaintive whispers; sighs could not break, it was as a lake frozen over to the brim, and beneath that ice the breath lapsed faintingly, but lapsed into an internal pulsation too dangerously quick, a pulsation which indeed pressed the spirit to the edge of earth's existence; that thin, how thin a line of darkness which divides from light, a line one cannot pass in sleep, or swoon, or trance,

nor in dreams, but in death alone. Was it death then Geraldi saw, and deserved to see, when he turned his eyes to examine coldly and deliberately the effect of his communication? He thought so, nay, believed, and for the time as bare and remorseful an agony seized upon him as though he had murdered Geraldine, not her happiness only. For white lay the shadow of death upon her face, ghostly grey upon her relaxed and stirless lips, deep violet round her eyes, those eyes that would not wholly close, but showed a gleam of filmy pearl and azure within the golden lashes, a dreary sight. And when Geraldi moved his arm which had encircled her, scared from his cruel embrace by a fear as cruel, her head fell, not softly, as when pressed by the poppy wreath of slumber, but heavily, and where it dropped, remained.

Geraldi could bear no more; he had never really had anything to bear except what even in its suffering is passion through ecstasy, and rapture in its most restless moods. Now flung from his hope of love, vitalising life with treble energy against the conviction of death, if not true, a reality to him; he had no place to flee unto; a wandering star is not more lonely in the

deserts and the depths of space. Self-reliance spent in an instant at that surpassing shock, no help near, none in himself, and no hope from her, he fled from her, not knowing whither he meant to go, but by instinct going to the right place and person. As in uneasy dreams the night-walker arises and wanders safely through unknown places, so he who had never been in a room of Hope Park before, went straight to the dining chamber, and direct, opening the door mechanically, yet advancing with steps that staggered not. The whole distinguished company were met, all had eaten enough to be able to talk, and drunk enough wine to make conversation agreeable. All, except Diamid Albany, whose mind was so perfectly in training, that he could bring it to bear at any moment on the most difficult question or interminable argument, yet who preserved so strict a duality of being, that his heart was free and revelling with his precious charge upstairs. As the door opened, the decorous retainer put to guard it might as well have tried to prevent a lightning from shining in at an open window, as Geraldi from going whither he would; the rest of the servants remained immutable as statues each behind his

chair, exact patterns of what their models should have been, for their masters and mistresses were all disturbed, and exclaimed in tones as affrighted and trembling as if a ghost had entered. Quietly as a ghost, indeed, Geraldi glided, creeping to Albany's chair, and whispered, for he meant none else to hear, though all heard the hoarse and hollow utterance—"Geraldine is dead."

Never had a person who deserved so little, endured so much of misery, distress, and that indescribable care we call worry, as Albany. It really seemed as though he, to whom it mattered most whether Geraldine were dead or lived, were the last who had an interest in her, and hold upon her. Every matron in the company rushed after her mother; and her mother, who had never tended her in her life, made as though she had never quitted her an instant, nor weaned her from her side. She stood at the head of the sofa on which Geraldine had swooned, and Geraldi at the foot; on each side pressed a crowd of fair and curious faces; for her husband there was no room. And Albany, whose deepest passion, whether of grief or joy, never interfered with his philosophy, saw that the best thing he could do was to summon medical aid, so long despised by

him, but now desperately desired. But while writing a message in the library, one came for him from Geraldine, who had revived with the quick response of youth to remedies untried before; Geraldi brought the message. As it is said that great sinners, after great judgments passed away, become more reckless, so was the boy more sullen and more saucy, for on delivering the message, he contrived to convey the sense of his own value in Geraldine's eyes, and returned before Albany could reach the bed-room, to the side of her pillow. But whatever were Geraldine's wishes, her will was against his that time; she ordered him to go, as she had ordered every other person to go out of the room; and this time, he knew not why, he dared not disobey, nor try to thwart her.

No embrace, however weak, no words of love, however low, for her husband. She only said, and rather more imperiously than she had addressed Geraldi, "I want Lady Delucy. I must see her directly—send for her. I cannot sleep nor die, whichever it is to be, till I have seen her."

"I will send for her instantly," answered Diamid; "she shall be here to-night"—for he knew she was only in the next county. He rejoiced too

much that Geraldine's freak set towards her, to wonder at it for an instant—we seldom wonder when what we wish for happens. For he knew by experience the invaluable influence of Lady Delucy in illness or sudden woe, her soothing sweetness and secret strength, her character perfect in its maternity. Such a nurse for mind and body could not be bought or hired—long had he coveted for Geraldine a friendship for which she did not care, and which the elder lady was too delicate to press upon the wayward girl. Now he only thought, "she finds at last, that she wants indeed a friend—as I find that at last a husband is neither friend, nor mother, nor nurse—alas!" So a third time that day was the electric telegraph put to Geraldine's use, and Lady Delucy arrived almost simultaneously with physicians sent for from London.

Now, though Lady Delucy had prophetically feared lest the united happiness of Diamid and Geraldine might be a destiny too brilliant for endurance; she had also fervently longed for the dispersion of the dread possessing her, had prayed ardently for their steadfast peace. Few women, none save the best and the noblest, regret disappointment befalling others who have acted

towards them with injustice, even if the only seeming injustice has been the difference between the balance of happiness in the different destinies, or what, for want of a better name, we call good fortune. This, Albany's first friend, would have gladly given—not only her life for his, that were too easy a gratification — but, her life for Geraldine's, her health for hers, her peace, if not of heart, of conscience—that possession most precious which the pure who suffer alone know how to prize. Eager and earnest were her questions asked of Diamid, the first person she saw on her arrival; slow and despondent his replies, for what could he say? Even she saw as well as felt, that he had deeper cause for care than Geraldine's bodily indisposition—a cause she could not divine, and dared not enquire of him. She could not divine, for a woman whose devotion to a man is disinterested, never suspects that another woman could fail in her allegiance to the same. And directly she found that she could confer no consolation on him, she hastened to succour where she might be most needed, after all.

Physicians had examined Geraldine by that time, and had taken care not to betray to their

patient their suspicion of her imminent danger; nor could they succeed in convincing her parents of it, they could not, or would not, believe such a possibility. Her mother had often fainted in her girlhood, and her father, from whom she inherited the consumptive temperament, had outlived the suspicious weakness of his youth.

On entering Geraldine's room, Lady Delucy started, as well she might, to see Geraldi there; she had never given him credit for being really of so much consequence to his cousin as Geraldine had chosen to make out in her childhood's history. And, had Geraldi not happened to have seen Lady Delucy, he would probably have taken her for a nurse; but he had seen her—he knew her, and also instantly knew why she had been sent for. He had never dreamed of Geraldine so acting, for the jealousy of a man differs essentially in its monitions from that of a woman, save in those cases where morally the sexes seem in unnatural encroachment upon each other. A man's jealousy is resolute and rash; a woman's, spiritual, but oh! how subtle; his would visit the victim with sudden and murderous revenge, hers would drain from existence its green and healthful joy, and blight the blossom at its heart,

of the sweet flower called hope, leaving the sapless stem, the withered petals to their death in life.

And so now Geraldi trembled; an earthquake's throes rend not more suddenly the earth's material calm, than the shock of his suspense heaved his spirit; for now he recalled the false, in what he had stated, rather than the true, and the probability of his real surmise vanished; for himself he foresaw disgrace, and, worse than disgrace, the death of Geraldine's love. No need now to send him from her side, he was only too thankful to go; and she, whose suspense was at least as terrible as his, cared not to detain him near her; if she should after all need a witness, he was not the one, nor should he be compromised, there was another, the person who had told *him*.

Lady Delucy sat down by Geraldine, whom they had not dared to move from the sofa on which she lay. Nothing but illness at a crisis could have made a girl naturally generous and amiable, so morbidly inconsiderate and unjust. Every one knows that there are many ways of saying the same thing; a reticent and delicate hint, a question implied rather than expressed, when that which has to be mentioned must hurt

the person addressed, at all events, and may wound the heart incurably. But Geraldine would not greet Lady Delucy, and thrust back her soft hand; weak as she was, she reared her head from the pillow, and surveyed her companion with haughty and irreverent gaze; the volition of jealousy more violent than that of love, galvanized her into momentary strength, and she exclaimed in a voice authoritative as that of an elder catechising a rebellious child,—

"Did Mr. Albany ever ask you to marry him? I will know from your own lips; and if so, why did you refuse him?"

There never was a softer heart than the lady's; had there been the least admixture of love's humility in the manner of the question, or even the wildered incoherence of passion overwrought, she could have pardoned it more readily, and replied more easily; but she, too, had pride, and pride that had been half-starved, not pampered, like Geraldine's, with every luxury of love's indulgence. By great calmness and dignity unruffled, she hoped to arrest what she could not believe was more than a suspicion—how roused, she knew not.

"Your illness only, my dear child," she

answered, "could have put such a fancy into your head, you have been dreaming *awake*, as we do at times in illness; try to rest, and above all do not think, we will think for you instead; and be assured that nothing has ever happened to *me* which can signify the least to *you*."

With a dread, quivering clutch, Geraldine seized Lady Delucy's hand—a clutch of the weak and wasted fingers only, for the hand had no power to hold—a mere momentary grasp, as it were a spasm of touch, wild as the spasm of suspense, that gave her spirit an instant strength —short-during as a babe's convulsion, powerful as a grown man's madness. No condition of bodily sanity could be a match for this—the insanity of sickness.

"Yes or no," screamed Geraldine, with a cry like the cry of a child convulsed, a short, sharp, shriek, intermingling with the gasps of vague distress. "Yes or no, or I shall die—I will die—I *can* die if I choose, this moment."

And what was strange, or perhaps natural, Lady Delucy was appalled into belief that the actual danger which she contemplated, would indeed be the death she feared. Now she had a theory (which she had never had the oppor-

tunity of testing), that common sense is the best antidote to excessive exaltation of the faculties. In an instant she made up her mind to tell no lie, nor confess the genuine truth, but to generalise. She therefore answered lightly with—oh! how heavy a heart and depressed a feeling respecting her own worth or mission in the world, we cannot write,—"You are very much younger than Diamid, my dearest Geraldine. All men who marry late have had ideas, if not intentions of marrying early; it may not have been for love, very often for gain, sometimes—"

Here Geraldine broke in with weakened tones that wailed into a sob almost before they spent themselves. "It is true then, true, and *he* is true, not Diamid, not Diamid, but *he*." Then Geraldine's eyes closed, and she lay still again, still as in the swoon which had whelmed her faculties after Geraldi spoke the truth he cruelly perverted. But Geraldine this time was in no swoon actual; she suffered too strongly, it was but the swoon mimetic of hysteria, that last mystery left for modern medicine, and modern courage to explain. The lady *understood*, though she could not have explained it; she was in misery for the misery she had caused, and for which she directly

blamed herself, as persons of uncharged conscience are ready to do. Oh, that she could give consolation! let those who wish the same never try to offer it through *words*; the very fragrance of a flower sickens the sick at heart, and words, however tender, rasp the sensitive ear of the tortured brain. In fact, consolation is as awkward an intruder upon sorrow, as any companion save the lover, upon love; so much of love is sorrow, and so precious is sorrow, in the place of love, clothed in the raiment of that familiar dead delight.

"It is not true," said the lady, who had never embraced sorrow in the place of love, for love had never nestled near her. "It is not true that he loved me as he loves you—perhaps not true that he loved me *at all*." Now, as the lady herself *had* believed herself beloved, she felt as though she made in this remark the last concession of charity; she thought she had done the utmost to veil the truth without actual falsehood. But, she implied the fact which Geraldine had dreaded to have confirmed;—that was enough to seal for that young heart, the doom of its despair.

Truly, we should never seek to know what we fear. The mystery of Hope is a celestial phantom placed between the heart in its frail humanity,

and the reality of Awe; nor should its veiling brightness be rent with our own sacrilegious hand; if we are to prove the worst, if for us the mystery of Terror is to be fulfilled, let Heaven's own lightnings rend the radiant mist, and Heaven's own mercy temper the justice of the revelation.

With all her self-created assurance, Geraldine had not really believed Geraldi—she now knew by the torturing extremity of her conviction, that she had not,—but she believed *now*, and remorselessly the truth entered as iron into her soul. Almost as calm as death is enforced resignation, hard as the nether millstone is the pride of patience. So calm and rigid Geraldine remained some time, that the lady hoped she was asleep, and even thought so;—for the flutter of a few strayed golden hairs on the girl's cheek showed that still she breathed and lived; and her companion trusted—she dared not but trust—that in sleep the distressful hallucination would spend itself, into it passing as one of its own dreams, and so remain at the awaking, or perhaps be as a dream forgotten. For the lady never imagined Geraldine had been told; she for a moment forgot she had told any one herself,

and she could understand and pardon that with which she could not sympathize—a suspicious imagination informing a passionate nature. She also pitied the young wife, for knowing that Albany was of necessity much occupied with what could not interest Geraldine, she thought it possible her heart had during those pauses of conjugal intercommunion lapsed into loneliness severely felt, because so strongly contrasting with the sympathy at all other hours her own. Little knew the lady of the preparations intellectual pride had been making in Geraldine's mind so long, for the final ruin of its peace—or how easily the heart's happiness succumbs when mental peace is destroyed. Less knew she of the force, and depth, and fierceness of Geraldine's spiritual pride, surpassing in its suddenly-aroused activity, the strength of her love, as the heart's master-pulse, the wrist's small throbbing thread. Much has been said, preached, and written, about the evil of pride; but in good truth such words fall to the ground, where they deserve to lie; no one declares the real reason why pride is wrong, and an insult to the Majesty of Heaven; for few indeed know, and those few are too proud to confess. There is an absurd idea, which, by the

way, no proud person ever entertains, that pride in all its kinds and every degree is wrong; and it therefore may sound paradoxical to assert, what all proud persons know nevertheless to be true, that pride is as necessary for the maintenance of the human condition in its *human* perfection, as charity is necessary for the maintenance of the spiritual condition, whose perfection is universal love. Is there a virtue which, by abuse, that is, through excess, may not sink to weakness, the atmosphere surrounding vice? what virtue has not ,at times, by individuals or parties, been abused, degraded through excess? Yet, what without pride is ambition—not emulation, the desire to excel others, but the desire to excel? What without it is honour,—not the principle of duelling, but the principle which bids a man make his will, and never contract a debt? What is chivalry without it,—not particular devotion to every woman, but general reverence for all? What without pride is poverty?—not the poverty which begs and crawls by day, and wantons and feasts at night; but the poverty which the rich dare not to insult by helping, and which those neither rich nor poor suspect not. Above all, what without pride is

passion — the anguish of disappointed love? wreathing with its purple blossoms the grave of hope till men tread on it as on a blooming garden —stifling the sigh that might reveal—drying the tear that would betray the tenderness of the wounded heart; keeping secrets for a thousand, nay a thousand thousand, from all but God. Certainly, for this life, pride is at least as precious a possession as great beauty, high race, or sufficient wealth; all blessings, liable enough to be abused, still blessings as much as the wine which can intoxicate, the food which may surfeit, the pain-charming opiate which is also poison.

But pride, in its excess, is more dangerous than all other passions, in proportion to its strength, which surpasses theirs. So is it alone, and for that reason alone to be controlled by love—the true spirit of self-sacrifice, even as pride is the true spirit of self-respect. And pride is fatal when it will not be controlled by love, but rises insurgent over it. Celestial hosts, swerving from their homage to the Heavenly principle, were lost—they are said to have fallen, a word how eloquent to express the degradation of the proud, none but the proud can tell.

So in this hour of trial, when pure, unselfish,

unmixed love alone, could have triumphed over evil, a woman who was no angel—fell. Just as Satan can bestow the kingdoms of this world and their glory, so can pride give strength to its own, for any, the last emergency. Geraldine stirred, and opened her eyes; as Lady Delucy thought, looked innocently and sweetly around. Soft and quiet were her tones, too; pride gave her power to modulate them.

"I want to see Diamid," she murmured; "will you call him?"

Lady Delucy thought, "Why should she not see him? was he not the proper companion for her?"

And she inwardly rejoiced, going instantly to call him. Close enough he was at hand, only outside the door, and listening to the silence as only the loving can listen, for a breath or a voice of Geraldine's. He crept to her side—he saw, too, the softer expression which masked her countenance at her own will, and his instant emotion rendered him unguarded—suspicious he never had been. He scarcely felt it strange when Geraldine said to him, though without holding out her hand—still she smiled the shadow-smile of illness,—

"My dearest Diamid, I want to ask you a

question,—I am sure you will answer it—indeed, I guess the answer. Did not you once ask Lady Delucy to marry you?"

Diamid was quite deceived; had he loved Lady Delucy passionately, he would have been thunderstricken; he might have equivocated in reply; but he had felt it so little, that he was not afraid to confess, nor ashamed how little he had felt.

"Long and long, and very long ago, before Geraldine was born—before she came to make all the world a paradise. That is what happens when tender creepers fondle round old stones," —and he bent to kiss her, so innocent of the root of that delicate and clinging parasite, for he himself was born without suspicion, or the power to envy or bear malice. But Geraldine with one hand covered her lips, with the other pressed him from her.

"Did you *hate* her?" she enquired vehemently. "I must know that; I—"

Now Albany was as just as generous, he knew he had never hated the woman whom he had never passionately loved—her goodness faced him suddenly—and, to excuse his abrupt reply, it must be said that Geraldine's sudden question,

its sudden vehemence, for an instant displaced the idea of her danger—he could not believe that one near death would exhibit a mood so earthly.

"No," said he, in solemn tones, "I did not hate her,—and no one could."

Albany had better not have uttered the truth this time, and soon he knew it; but he was irritated—he had married a child of genius, and one in all but genius still a child. When she acted childishly, she annihilated the ideal of the wife, which his imagination, mature as his manhood, cherished.

Soon, indeed, was he punished for his sincerity. For Geraldine called loud upon Geraldi, and though he was not near this time, her cries for him redoubled, until Albany, terrified at the excitement possessing her, called the boy himself. Geraldi slowly and reluctantly returned, expectant of immediate disgrace, and was crowned with immediate triumph.

"You loved me always, Geraldi, and were always true; Geraldi, you spoke the truth!" And she drew him to her arms; he, stunned with the sudden conquest, was almost shamed into gentleness unlike himself, thus doubly deceiving Albany, who amidst his deep distress, was even

consoled by the reflection that she had anyone near her whom she would allow to minister to her comfort.

If comfort, it was not calm for long. With the night a low delirium seized Geraldine ; she knew nothing, seemed to see no one, raved in murmurs, wailed in whispers, the most fearsome freak of malady to behold, if not to bear. Still, perhaps, the reaction of fever upon the brain, for the hour making there its stronghold, saved her lungs, at least it saved her life. But the moral mania left her not ; all night she shrank away when Albany approached her, shrank closer to Geraldi, who never left his position, nor unclasped her arms from his embrace.

CHAPTER II.

The time when Albany had asked Lady Delucy for her hand, had been the passion-spring of existence, which steeps all moods in an empurpling light. None but sweet words had dropped from his lips, for only sweet thoughts nestled in his brain, and his poet's imagination teemed with tender fancies. Then he felt just enough, not too much, to be able to make love eloquently. It is not the most deeply-loving who can plead most fluently, nor does he, enwrapt in another's being, seek for conceits or compliments to adorn his petition. Then it is true that Diamid had admired Lady Delucy—any man of fastidious taste must have done so. She was also agreeable to him, her soft heart and delicious

temper eased his irritable genius and soothed his nerves. But she was, as an object, supremely desirable, for she had high position, large fortune, and boundless generosity wherever she loved or approved. Born and self-trained a physiologist, he knew perfectly well that he was dear to her, and he concluded that his protection of her, and the devotion from which he could trust himself never outwardly to swerve, would be equivalents for what he wished her to bestow. He knew that she alone could advance him immediately to the high ground he wished to take; years of solitary aspiration and industry must bring him to that same point, self-elevated step by step, but that he would not bear; he had a singular theory, certainly having ambition for its germ, that genius, unless developed suddenly, and very early, was worthless. In fact, as far as intellect was concerned, he did not believe in late development at all.

Now when his father, a scholar and bibliopole, but no genius, had discovered his son's literary fancy, as he called it, and discovered it through Diamid's throwing up the employment and profession selected for him, and for which, unlike most who throw up practical commonplace, he

was totally unfit, that parent threw him up also to all intents and purposes, left him to himself; and it was the daughter of his former employer, who alone understanding him, had given him frankly the assistance he then most needed—means of literary publicity. He knew well that all belonging to her would become entirely at his disposal, did he marry her, not for what he considered selfish ends, they were so disguised beneath the promises of his genius.

Lady Delucy, having given him up, at first had expected he would marry, marry as most men do, some from one motive, some from another, few for love alone. When he did not marry, it cannot be denied that whatever quality took the place of vanity in her was flattered, and that her love became more than ever dear to her—it seemed a reality like the child unborn, or the child dead, in either case more precious than barren single-hearted love. Abroad he did not marry either, and on his first wandering fifteen years were spent; all that time she nursed her secret treasure, and it lived for her. Then he returned, and for some few years threw his whole genius into affairs, as he had his first years thrown it into literature, and with as startling

and positive a success. When Elisabeth had remarked to her mother, the night after they met him newly married, that she had fancied *something* six months before, she was not wide of the mark, for Diamid had done a thing as foolish as he could do, rendering himself ridiculous, and the lady who loved him more unhappy than was necessary. It was then he constructed the door in the wall between his garden and hers; for she had the tantalising felicity of knowing he lived close to her during his retreats into the country, as she had herself persuaded her husband to leave the pretty tenement in its grounds, which was attached to the castle—not to Diamid, but to Diamid's father, who had naturally left it to Diamid, on discovery that, after all, his son had distinguished himself above all other men of his age; nor been unfilial either.

So Diamid had constructed this entrance, and daily, some days hourly, the lady found him in her room. Servants remarked to each other, and Elisabeth also, to herself, on this arrangement; the daughter, who inherited her mother's gentle temperament, was delighted to think she would at last be happy; for even in her childhood Elisabeth had suspected the truth, as she once

said to her nurse, that Mr. Albany did not really care for *her*, she was certain, for he only kissed her and nursed her before her mamma, never deigning to notice her when he found her alone in the room.

Now Lady Delucy, who of course ought to have been stronger of will than when younger, was weaker; she could not trust herself to refuse him again, if again he asked her hand, which he was on the edge of doing, for still his comparative poverty debared him from complete popular success, though his party-success was perfect. So she never gave him the opportunity, for she never stayed with him alone, and Elisabeth marvelled why her mother pertinaciously called her to her, and whispered to her to remain, whenever Diamid spent the morning there, making the party that illustration of dullness, a triad. And Elisabeth was very glad, indeed, that Albany at last went away just before Charles Lyonhart returned from India. In deep self-disgust at his incapacity to outwit a woman, and sated of all but ambition—love he had then never tasted, Diamid left Northeden very suddenly, inflicting a deeper wound than he conceived he had it in his power to inflict, for now it mattered not to him to

conceal his indifference, and it breathed over his gentle manner like frost on dew; the sudden chill of the first winter-warning strikes not death to the flower of the field, as that light-dropping coldness pierced hope to its heart in the lady's faithful breast. Still, she was not prepared, even by his indifference to her, for his new preference, so rapidly conceived and consummated.

Nor was Diamid prepared for this either, any more than she, and in the sudden shock of passion, the seeds of retribution for him were sown, Lord Chevening's political party required a head, all the rest of the members were complete, and worked without it, as a steam-engine without a driver, perpetually crushing down their own designs, nor able to avoid what was actually unnecessary collision with the plans of others. And Lord Chevening determined to win Diamid wholly, as he had his sympathy, to have his strength. This nobleman was blood-descended from that first William Witt, who thrilled the senate with eloquence it had never before echoed, whose last words of harmonious defiance, and last awful apparition, excel in dramatic sublimity everything except Shakespere; and from that second William Witt, who, born of such a father

seemed to have been purposely endowed with every quality the parental genius had lacked, or disdained to use, and to have had the *genius* purposely denied, in order that he might become a martyr through the weakness which could not save the state the evils he could foresee and foretell. But as to Lord Chevening, whatever he inherited of the ambition and arrogance, certainly the genius and the sagacity remained quiet in their tombs for him. And he had need of Diamid Albany, knowing no better nor newer means to resort to to purchase him over, than to project and complete an alliance between him and his only child —he had no son. Now Diamid, if he had not cared to marry for love in his youth, cared even less now,—indeed, never thought about love at all, —though his fine taste would have revolted from an ugly or an unaccomplished wife. So was he punished ; for, seeing the child Geraldine, he loved her, loved her as only sages love little children, or young men their first ideal ; loved with all the pain of passion, yet the adaptive innocence of sympathy, all the anguish of adoration, and all the tenderness of protecting strength. And if he ever had a fear of anything after their union was accomplished, it had been the fear of losing her

love—not his own, which he knew and felt to be eternal. And now he believes that he has lost it, and finds for the first time, that without love life is mere existence, and wisdom only foolishness.

Meantime, as quietly as she could, under the circumstances, Lady Delucy mused in solitude on the singular interview she had had with Geraldine, and there gradually grew upon her—slowly, because she was so unwilling to entertain it—the remembrance that she had certainly confided to one ear her secret. She was equally certain of having told no one except the wild musician; but with all his peculiarity she had felt sure of his honour; how, besides, could *he* have confided, who had made or accepted no friends? For she had not an idea or dream of Geraldi's being mixed up in the matter—how should she have had? for she knew nothing about him, except that he was Geraldine's cousin, poor and proud. She had never been so angry with anyone as she now felt with herself; her secret "a caged bird flown," and she herself had opened the door. She chafed as a calm lake might chafe, whose shore the earthquake shook. Worst of all, though she instantly resolved to question Rodomant, she did not know where to find him,

for all communication she had with him was such as she might have maintained with her banker; from time to time—short times too, say once a fortnight or in three weeks—he sent her small sums of money, or single notes, duly registered. Still, these were always acknowledged, as requested, or rather demanded by him, to a certain place—a music-warehouse—and to that place she wrote, telling him that she must see him instantly, at her house in town where he had so often been; that he must meet her there, if it were only for ten minutes, and reply to a question she could not write, and he alone could answer. And she followed the letter—which she wrote in the night—to town the next day, after writing to her daughter, to say she should be at home the next.

But her torments were increased before she could get away. She had to see Diamid, who, when he heard that she was going, went to her room and let himself in; who for the first time in his life entirely convinced of her worth, overrated it in his imagination, rich as his heart was generous, and appreciated her for the first time in exact proportion as he misappreciated his dethroned idol, whom he had never loved so sadly, but whom no more he worshipped. She

had to hear him *say* that he had never done her justice, never so vividly perceived her secret and spiritual charms; and *confess* that he had been a happier and a wiser man if she had married him. This was the central sting of her sorrowful irritation; for this she knew. She knew by the prematurity of her first experience in life, by the perfect flower of her youth's amaranth love, that though not so blisfully intense, so ecstatically exalted as his joy in his lot with Geraldine, she could and would have bestowed upon him a safer, for a more endurant happiness, a more available wisdom for earthly purposes, than that child of brilliant promise, whose fall from the pure unselfishness of perfect love, had made him miserable in her own wayward misery.

He left Lady Delucy at last, after a long and to her most distressful interview—left her in a storm of inward excitement, which nothing could better have suited than the rushing mighty impulse of the express train. Scarcely serener when she reached town, her mood was much that of the weather when the storm is spent, yet still electric tints suffuse the clouds, and gild their edges, and the clouds seem angrier and more gloomy because of the deep blue gulfs between

them. All the elements of her character were in agitation, and her natural calm of temperament, in trying to restore itself, alternated with her indignation in a struggle new to her experience. In such a frame she awaited the coming of the offender.

Now, there are persons who never ought to be found fault with, rare and noble natures, of difficult and eccentric temper. They should not be blamed, simply because if they are blamed, they harden, their consciences as it were become negative; they will neither allow themselves to have done wrong, nor express, nor feel contrition. But such natures, if convicted uncondemned, will always confess, will overrate their misdemeanour, exaggerate it in their own esteem, repent heartily, and never offend again. Now Rodomant was a being of this order, and further, he was just now in no mind or mood to be found fault with; for he was, to use a phrase, only as much to the purpose as it is homely, getting on in the world, which of course in England means, and only means, making money. And though he sneered in secret at those who helped him to make it, it never occurred to him that he ought rather to have sneered at himself, for producing what the many could appreciate,

rather than what the few would have delighted in. And it really seemed as though his destiny were to be that which, while most dangerous, is also that most powerful to erect Self king of mobs, a rich man—positively, not relatively, rich, one of those men to whom it seems only necessary that they shall extend the palm, that fortune may rain into it golden droppings; the *one* talent of him who increased not, given to him that had made *ten*, not even to him that had made *five*. For Rodomant began to make money as fast as he pleased, and to be known not only in the unceiled chambers of the organ builders, but in that very fane were seldom the organ sounds, so that those who hear listen. Not only at grand morning performances, under distinguished patronage, where persons paid a guinea each to the art-trader, who just then hired Rodomant and *paid* him, but, even at the Abbey-service, this being of strong volition continued often to supplant the organist at his own good pleasure, and played statelily or eccentrically; it was all the same, he filled the space with music anyhow, for his fingers could not touch a note without generating tone—it was as the perfume of the blossom, the light spreading from the sun. And the aisles would

not empty, the reader would not leave the lectern, the choir-singers paused in their niches, like white birds resting on their nests, till the magician who had chosen to detain them there scattered his spell and let them go. Still, though it was known well enough, by that time, that this master of what cant calls the ecclesiastical school of music, was also a composer of an opera on no holy subject; not a soul guessed that he also supplied the pianoforte and the harp-market with the ephemeral trash, whose fashion, like other fashions, lasted a butterfly's life, and died. For though yet sound at his character's core, his heart yet a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, Rodomant despised all men, yet was all things to all men, not that he might win some to the most refining of all faiths but love, but to win all things for himself. So his mightiest and purest gift, the creative genius, did not languish in him, but slumbered, and grew in sleep, gained strength in its unsullied calm, for *that* would not prostitute itself to the end of gain, even though partially a just ambition. It happened, that as Rodomant mixed more in the world, he became not sensualised, for which he had to thank a spiritual imagination, and still more a cool cynical judg-

ment; but degraded in his aims, heart-frozen, if not hardened for ever. He became more worldly than wise, for now he longed to be rich after he had paid his debts, forgetting that her to whom he was indebted, he never could adequately, however literally he could, repay. He desired to be considered and called a rich man, while he yet aspired to be a musician, rich in hoards of genius; and by this frail golden thread were his wings bound awhile, fast as by his lost locks was chained the antique model of physical power.

He therefore was in a mood less modest than ever in his life, for the lust of wealth is ever ministrant to undue personal estimation. So when the note arrived at his address, and he received it in his hand,—opened it,—he hesitated not an instant about obeying it to the letter; not as a grateful person of inferior sex hastening to do homage to the lady who had most befriended and honoured him, but as a man condescending to a woman's whim; the weaker she, in his opinion, for besides not knowing her own mind. For, will it be believed, this wild unchastened heart imagined that the heart of his benefactress relented towards him,—sure proof that his

passion had declined from its perfection, and that love had never breathed within his breast.

Sooner, then, than she had expected him, he was announced to Lady Delucy. He came in with defiant tread, and a sort of smiling disdain in his countenance. She was surprised: all his old constraint he had also banished, yet she had admired him more in his most awkward moments. She did not sit down, she felt too disturbed even so far to take rest, nor did she offer him a chair, something in his manner forbade her; whereupon he took one in her very face, though the action was so evidently one of bravado, that it was rather grotesque than rude, and at any other time she would have laughed; even now she felt inclined to lecture him like a child. "I am amazed at you!" she began, in the dignified tone which Elisabeth, when a child herself, had been used to call "Mamma playing at queen." "But really, when you come before me and behave so strangely, I cease to be astonished at what you have done besides. I believe I told you I had a question to put to you, —let it be answered directly, that our interview may be as short as possible."

This treatment did not tend to subdue him; on

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the contrary, his glance gathered satire, his eyebrows lifted up, his lip drawn down, subdued her in part, she remembered how she had always humoured, perhaps spoiled him. So she thought to treat him kindly, and sat down too. Upon which motion of hers, he whimsically rose to his feet, folded his arms, bowed his head, and waited.

"What on earth makes you behave so?" she exclaimed, in a tone of obvious annoyance.

Said he, with mock respect, that imparted irreverence to his manner, "We are no longer equals in art, we must not do the same thing. When my lady stood, it would have been unpolite for me to stand; when she sits, for me to sit would be a scandal."

Fortunately he touched her comic vein, she was provoked to smile, and he even quickened her curiosity.

"Why, then, are we no longer equals in art? though that has nothing to do with my question."

"Because we never were equals in anything else. You treated me as an equal *then*, and I bore it, because we *were* equals in art. *Now* you treat me like a servant; formerly you would have said, 'take a seat, I am sure you must be tired!' in such a soft voice, as if it breathed

through silk. *Now* we are therefore no longer equals in your esteem. Besides, I owe to you still—but not for long—and then—then I am free of you and all your sex."

"I fear, if I free you," said the lady angrily, "that it will be but for you to be bound again; for you are, alas! not to be trusted."

He stamped and frowned. "I do not understand; is your gold sent from my hand, changed to brass by your touch? Are such charges to be addressed to me?"

"You best know what you deserve; if you can deceive, you can of course also deny."

"What! from your lips, which should be the last—"

— "Why the last? if you deserve—and you must—you do."

"Because," he said between his sharp-shut teeth, "a man cannot give a woman the lie, any more than a man can fight a woman, if she injures or insults him."

"Oh, I wonder," said she more severely than ever, "I wonder you pretend to respect any one of the laws of chivalry, you who have broken the chief and crowning one."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Rodomant, re-

covering himself, for he actually could not comprehend her meaning. "And how much more of woman's idle nonsense am I to hear? Ask the question quickly, and let me go."

"You have betrayed my confidence!" she exclaimed, as soon as she could command her voice, for what she believed to be his impudence appalled her, made her tremble. "And the least you can do is to tell me to whom you did so. Remember, as indeed you must, the night you expressed to me your feelings, and when I generously—I must say so—generously confessed to you mine, believing you as pure in heart as you were sound in head. That night you asked me the name of the person to whom I had given what you audaciously asked me to give you, and which I refused you. You, more audaciously, asked me the name—I, more generously, told it to you. You asked me, when I was half wild with terror, lest anyone should overhear us, and weak with the fatigue of a long, long night. I did wrong—quite wrong; and now I know it; I judged you too kindly, I believed in you too confidingly, and I have met with my reward; for you have revealed my secret, to whom, I know not, nor when; but *you* know, for it has become

known, and has created wretchedness, which for some souls may be eternal."

"I reveal a secret! I repeat *yours!*" he cried, in a voice, whose sudden anger made her quail, for it was like the noble anger of one unjustly accused—it was also solemn. For he lifted his right hand,—"I swear by all the stars, by the throne of Heaven, and Him who sits"—

But the lady flew as it were forward towards him, and flung her hand across his lips, "Spare, spare me that, and your own soul."

But he plucked her hand away, and threw it from him; his aspect struck her, for though yet he shuddered with anger, he gazed wildly, dreamily around. "I *will* swear, I do swear, by all you believe, and *I* would fain believe. It is *you* who are false, lady; a lie never blackened my lips. And as for ingratitude, it is you who are ungrateful; for I was the faithfullest servant you had, and I would have served you to your own glory. *I* tell? I repeat your lover's name? From that night I never recalled the name; it sank down in my memory like a stone in the deep water. It was only, I grant, when I was mad, that I wished to know it, and I was honourable enough to forget."

"I may, perhaps, gain some explanation another way," said the lady, sighing, "for we both seem under an hallucination *now*. That man's young wife has found out that he loved me twenty years ago—who told her? None knew it but he, and I, and you. *He* did not tell her; I asked him."

"And he *denied* it, and you believe *him*, and not *me?*"

"Certainly, I believe him, for it was not—it could not be his interest to tell her, and besides"—

"Besides, you choose to believe him—a woman's reason! And how was it more *my* interest than his? What have I to do with him, or her, or you?"

"Misery of miseries, there is no end of its complication! Oh, that I could put faith in any one! But hear to the end, for you know not all. She was ill before, and *now* she is believed to be dying—it may have killed her—*I* may have killed her! As a last hope for her life, she is going back to Italy, that is, if her strength lasts long enough. And she is going, if she goes, without her husband. She will not even see him. Suppose she dies, what shall I feel? what will *you* feel, if you have deceived me now?"

He was looking down now, with folded arms, trying, though she gave him not credit for the effort, to rack memory to a confession of what it contained not—had he confessed, indeed, that he was guilty, he would have seemed to himself to lie.

"I am tired out of this farce," she exclaimed, and truly she seemed so, impatient also, for she thought he was allowing his thoughts to wander from the subject. "Excuse me, but really I am driven to extremity, and refinements are out of time. Do you ever—have you ever, drunk wine lately? you never did."

"If I say yes, perhaps you will believe that I do *not*," he answered bitterly. "And, if Rodomant *did* drink wine it would never make of him a fool and a villain, for wine *makes* not fools and villains, but draws out of men who are such their folly and their villainy. He does not drink wine, because wine must be bought—and he would rather buy power. Nor does he need wine to inspire him, for he has genius—and, lady, genius is always truth."

To her troubled mind this self-defence sounded pure rodomontade, an invention to beguile her from her purpose. She was sorely puzzled, and deeply hurt; never had she been so disappointed

as in him, and she despised herself with quite as unexampled a contempt. Did he deceive her, then, or himself? Strange paradox as it may appear, he was actually innocent. Yet, had he been as thoroughly intoxicated as the worst and meanest of men, he could not more entirely have forgotten the circumstances under which he conveyed the meaning of the truth, if not the truth, in words. He did not *know* he had told, for he had not *meant* to tell Geraldi. The greatest penalty of ideal genius is its tendency to act on impulse; motive it has none—*should* have none, if it is pure and true to nature; but in proportion to its singleness and sincerity is the danger that it may involve others, and the necessity that it shall be constantly misunderstood. In fact, Lady Delucy should have died rather than have revealed, under any circumstances, such a fact as that which, in the passion of the hour, had seemed too trifling to have any result whatever. We ever err when our endurance fails even for a moment. And possibly, she should never have registered within her a rash vow; for history, both sacred and secular, teems with precedented proofs that Providence dooms such to punishment—rewards it never.

"Who then repeated—who?" she reiterated in lower tones, yet impregnated with distrust rather than regret.

"She who repeated it to one, may have repeated to many a secret—what difference?" was his reply (irreverent even for him, and he was never remarkable for veneration). To her sensitive ear it sounded insult; it was her duty to bear no more. She left the room, and he did not look up after her—only waited till she had gone, to go. And she heard and saw no more of Rodomant himself, only received, a week afterwards, a song whose title-page was emblazoned with the vulgarest designs in raw scarlet, blue, and gold, (aye, vulgar as any valentine,) and dedicated to herself—not only printed either, but published, too:—

Cruel as kind, and false as true!
  Who but a madman could desire
Moonlight with lightning, hail with dew,
  Sunshine with storm, and frost with fire?
Nightshade and violet's purple meet
  In the spirit-wreath of thy radiant hair;
Gall is distill'd with honey sweet,
  When thy looks are fond and thy speech is fair.

Lo! in thy glance gleams April light,
  Smiles melting through a mist of tears,
And flashing on the eager sight
  Till Bliss too beautiful appears!

Lo! from thy glance breaks wild disdain
To strike the gentle gazer blind,
And shafts, deep dipped in icy pain.
Winged wilful from thy wayward mind.

Lo! on thy lips in summer sleep,
The noon-delighting rose is fed;
Thy speech with sympathy makes weep
The saddest heart whose hope is dead.
Lo! calm-beguiled beneath thy sight,
Won by thy mild voice to repose,
He writhes with sudden stinging sleight
From scorpions curled beneath thy rose.

Slight as the reed for slenderness,—
Hard as the uncut diamond gem—
Soft as the babe for tenderness,
Harsh as the judge whose lips condemn.
Rending the rainbow in thy wrath;
Crushing the leaf till its spring is dead,—
Trampling on hearts in thy daily path,
That thy hand had raised, and thy smiles had fed.

Long as the proud neck bears the weight
Of thy fairy foot, thou art melting meek!
Let the proud heart but rise elate,
And thou spurnest—starvest by a freak.
A stone let the humble ask of Thee,
And thou givest fine bread of thine own;
Let him ask for bread, confiding free,
And lo! Thou givest him a stone.

Whether Rodomant scrawled the not too laureate-like lines himself, or employed a verse-monger, she never knew, but they produced the

impression upon her acquaintance which she would least have desired they should receive; that she had carried on with the young musician one of those solemn farces called flirtation, a word she abhorred only less than the word of which it was the sign. It was, besides, a pretty pendant to the Adelaída, which he had designed to immortalize her name and his; this absurd effusion. And further, the singular popularity of the former extended also to the latter, which as nearly attained the burlesque of sentiment as its predecessor had approached the sublime of tragic passion. And it also tended to produce a confused idea of the author's real merits, for it elicited from the waspish renown of Tims Scrannel's wisdom, an unnecessarily elaborate criticism, in which he perorated on the near affinity of genius with insanity, perhaps because himself so undeniably sane.

CHAPTER III.

On a windless winter night a small dark figure stood alone upon the chief bridge of the bright river that sparkles round the quays of Parisinia.

Parisinia, the capital of Iris, a city fair as Athens, in the vernal freshness of her violet wreath, and awful in the truth and tradition of its history as the annals of imperial Rome; fantastic, faëry, as the changing cloudland of the poets, whose granite gates and marmorean palaces frown pale upon the ground which calls to Heaven for vengeance, a Heaven as yet silent in answer to its silent cries. City, whose grown-up children of to-day dance over the indistinguishable graves of her children murdered yesterday; whose intermural groves seem with their summer sighs

and creaking autumn groans, to breathe eternal lamentation over the martyrdom of myriads—a martyrdom unregistered, unwept.

Each day has its saint, each saint his feast, in Parisinia. To-night it is a feast of lights. No marvel that figure leans alone upon a bridge, for bridges and quays, palaces, bazaars, and hovels, have poured forth their people into the streets. And he who stands alone is one to whom the popular excitement, the confused glare, the noise of the one-idea'd multitude are poetry afar off. Above the stars keep watch still, as if frozen into the sky, the intense white moon spreads her silvery-blue wings wide as God's love, upon the city. Below, there heaves a sea of mingled mist and rainbow, phantoms of fire melting into ghosts of smoke, flame fountains, and earth suns, mock lightnings and mimic moons, shoot, rush, and spray into the air, whose divine clarity they no more disturb than the surgent and sinking joy-cries of the grown-up children interrupt the calm chorus of the everlasting star-song.

The figure in the cloak, with hat muffling the brows, and white face leaning downwards, to greet the moon's white face in the frost-spelled water, was the figure of Rodomant. What doest

thou there, Art's prophet, in that region of dangerous delight? Once in it, even if not of it, can he escape the condition of moral mediocrity, which its intense civilisation, its exaggerated existence, its perfect worldliness, engender? On this vast altar of ten thousand innocents, is his soul also to be sacrificed to the flesh? Vain sacrifice, not pure as theirs. Not to the flesh, it seems. He is thinner and paler than ever, spiritualised to the utmost by intellectual ambition, unhumanised as much as possible by spiritual pride. The principle which religionists call the devil, that defiant and unrelenting power, that loveless Sathanas, has certainly permission to bestow the kingdoms of this world and their glory, who can doubt it? For its masterpieces of desire and pinnacles of honour—yea, and the strongholds of success, are as surely his own as the world God made and breathed this beauty upon, the world over which the Divinity of nature spreads its dœdal wings is *not* his own, but God's. Truly, those who really long after the glory of the world God did *not* make, may have it, though if gained that dreadful guerdon by His own, He wrests it from their enjoyment by all-levelling sorrow, or the disappointment that cheats satiety.

This demon in his robes of light, his material promises dyed in the deep lustre of the supplicant's golden imagination, had appeared to Rodomant, as it appears to all at one time or another, though to none but the most choicely gifted in an attitude so alluring, and with temptations so spiritual and so strong. In an evil hour—for in it he lost his faith in the only person he loved and honoured, Rodomant received the first proof of foreign recognition, so important to one who has gained a local one, for he had learned to look upon the country which first nurtured his genius as his home, and despised it accordingly, as such natures are apt to do. On his way to his lodgings after his last interview with Lady Delucy, he had called—he scarcely knew why, to see whether any other letter had arrived at his address; and found one, thus having received two that day, a circumstance which, absurd as it may appear, increased his consequence in his own eyes, he having received none for months, except acknowledgments from his first patroness. This second letter, when opened, proved to be a communication from the most popular composer of modern operas, living in Parisinia, to whose musical and dramatic recreation he was entirely devoted. It

was an address masonically majestic and fraternal, treating Rodomant as his equal, by courtesy, for actually he considered none equal with himself; but it was all the same to Rodomant, who was as much his inferior in cunning as his superior in art. And after a cloud of complimentary words, there was evolved a meaning which as a tribute to his genius Rodomant implicitly accepted, little suspecting that he was being dealt with for purposes of gain, that is gold, not glory. He was invited to come over and criticise the performance of his Alarcos, before conducting it himself in the most perfectly constructed theatre of Europe, with an orchestra organised with the same precision as Parisinia's military force. It may seem paradoxical that any composer, in this age of rivalries, should seek to advance the interests of another; but this was also a manager on an immense scale, and had sufficient capital both of money and repute to speculate where there was but a ghost of risk, and to spend where an outlay would probably reduplicate its own return.

Alarcos had already been produced in Parisinia, but at inferior houses, and though Rodomant had given careless permission on being paid, after his usual fashion of casting off things behind, and

rushing onwards, his replies would have been different if he had had the least idea how his work was distorted and defiled on those occasions. Still the lower Parisinians, whose taste for terror seems imbibed with their mothers', or rather foster-mothers' milk, for there are in Parisinia no mothers; —the ranks of the people were literally bitten with the new tragedy, which, curtailed as it might be in the ideal portions of the plot, received from the acting company and scene-painter, its full complement of horrors. Rodomant had unintentionally, in choosing such a subject, created what hundreds spend dreary years in trying to invent, and fail,—an interest. Had he felt, or been, one whit like the Parisinians, he would have shrunk in moral agony from the interest he roused *in them*, as his physical nerve would have shuddered from the contemplation of the machine for murder, which a citizen of Parisinia patented. But his was so fine an imagination, that it had power to infuse horror with hues of beauty; thus it happened, that the matchless charm of the music decided the success in England, of a work whose bare tragedy would have made it fail. But in Parisinia it was the tragedy, not the music, upon which the town was mad, just as in

the books of its sovereign novelist, it is the fictive crime, not the retributive moral, which tells so powerfully upon the populace.

When the military bands, which had been stationed at different points of the city—not near enough each to each, to mix their diapasons—ceased, Rodomant knew that it was the signal for Alarcos. In seven theatres at once, its first note struck at the same hour; no art-furor had ever been so universal, or endured longer, except a rage of blood. A necessary condition to enjoy a passing triumph, is a calm, what it is almost impossible to procure in England, where there is neither a social arrangement, an art-exposition, nor a design for architecture, without a flaw. Rodomant pressed through the illuminated streets unnoticed, which was just what he approved,—for he detested contact with common persons,—and was met at the door of the theatre by a deputation of famous men, all treating him as though he alone were famous, which he approved as much. Nor did they pester him with too prolonged or multitudinous a presence, for they only accompanied him to the door of the box of the first celebrity among them, a prince of literarians; then vanishing, left him with the

owner himself, who after standing till Rodomant was seated, bowed, and removed also to the other corner, farthest from his guest. This box had been selected for Rodomant because he wished to be himself unseen, and the literarian, among other luxuries, had ordained screens of fine wire to extend along the front of the box, impervious to lights without, though semi-diaphanous from within.

There is not in the world a dramatic audience so refined and so audacious as that of Parisinia; no critic arbitrates for the crowd—it is a crowd of critics. Disappoint it—baulk its passion for the novel, and it bristles like a monstrous snake, whose hiss is the sure and instant indicator of its poisoning sentence. Fascinate it by a shock of novelty, some fresh colour added to its Iris, and it will fawn at your feet, wreathe round you a calm enchanted circle, the glare of its glance melt to a softer light than smiles, its fangs drop honey.

The fascination of the hour—his own—yet reflected back to him after he dispensed it, crept on Rodomant, and conquered. It was the hour in which he first both tasted luxury and drank its fulness—luxury, ideal and sensuous—the perfume with the flower. He had never been *idle* to enjoy

before, and labour may be love, but to a delicate frame it is never pleasure. Then he sank into cushions which supported, while they yielded the softest rest—rest without sleep, the rarest; no trifle this, for it is impossible for a sensitive nature to enjoy anything under circumstances of physical discomfort. And when he looked out in front, he saw that great sight, a mighty multitude possessed with the spirit of the hour, totally unlike an English crowd, with its restless, ignorant, and divided interest. Here a phalanx of faces glittered, with an expression one-like, absolute, pale with eagerness, strained with expectation; a galaxy of glances fixed and ardent, which seemed to devour what they gazed on. Rodomant shivered like an aspen when that great vision spread before him; he believed them spelled by the sacred theurgy of art; he dreamed that from the heaven of his imagination he had rained upon them that manna of the spirit—sweet as the food of angels—a universal sympathy. [Little guessed he that but for the scenic sorcery unrolled before them, they would not have listened, or that, like fire to the salamander, was to them their natural atmosphere of fear. What tended to deceive him most was the music itself, an immense or-

chestra not interpreted, but produced it as it originally stood. In England it is impossible to make a great orchestra of one mind; in Germany orchestras are small, though generally perfect. Parisinia's taste, the quality which she alone possesses, is infused into art as into fashion, so entirely to charm the senses, that the soul through them has no appeal to make.

Rodomant worshipped himself that night, and believed himself adored. There was no fatigue in store for him, his was too inexhaustible a nature, his own music refreshed and strengthened him till he was equal to any effort. Had it not been so, he might have shrunk from the advances of the gentleman in the box with him, who, immediately the curtain fell, came to him and requested his company that night—he said not to a party—there are no cant terms in Parisinia; but he conveyed to him the impression that he did him the highest honour it was in his power to confer on one so high. This man spoke Rodomant's own language, and as they met one another in passing out, acted as his interpreter. Nothing can convey the compliments the rest paid Rodomant, too delicate to be crystallised into any other tongue, and it was their *manner*,

through which he imbibed the essence of their courtesy, sweet, if cold as the ice-confection for which their banquets are renowned. Still, it was only to these few, who were the unknown to the many, that Rodomant was introduced on his way to his entertainer's house. He was to remain incognito, as far as the public was concerned, until he performed a self-inauguration by conducting Alarcos; this arrangement also pleased him well.

In the rooms he entered with his conductor, he met again all those to whom he had been introduced, many others—not *too* many—and many women. He was a neophyte quite prepared to reverence a social system which lent such reverence to art; for to do the Parisinians justice, there is much unconscious and childlike generosity in their recognition of genius; but then, perhaps, their passion for novelty is as childish too. Rodomant had never actually seen society, except at a bookseller's house in London,—nay the house of a puritanically-disposed publisher,—no free-handed, generous-minded one, such as exist, thank Providence, and *are* the Providence of genius. And those whom there he met, he met in the presence, nay, by the side of a woman

not too knowing to be wise, nor too experienced to be innocent. If he thought that gaud-besprent gingerbread drawing-room an ambassador's, he might well be pardoned for esteeming that in which he found himself, a saloon of the chief and central palace of the regnant of Parisinia. It seemed, to his artistic and unsophisticated appreciation, not a room at all, but a temple, dedicated to nymphs and oreads, delicate-footed fauns, and bearded satyrs. There was space—for the Parisinians, if they sleep at all, which seems mythic, sleep in carpetless closets, on pallets a prisoner would despise, dedicating all the room to effect, and full dress hiding dress, the perfection of taste, as the perfection of art hides art. And as it is space, which more than anything lends illusion to the cathedral and the theatre, so here, in a private assembly, the same effect obtained. And for ornament, scarcely another was employed than flowers; flowers wreathed the walls, and hung in long tendrils from alabaster vases, and rested on fair bosoms, while they blushed in dark locks. If few of them were real, what signified it? they all *seemed* so, and for one, Rodomant did not know it.

But innocence is incompatible with wisdom,

though purity from wisdom never separates; to know *no evil* is to know nothing that can make us of service to others in this evil world. And there is no shock so great, yet so tempered by its sadness, as the entrance of the knowledge of evil, to the pure. Against temptations, the strongest to ordinary men, Rodomant wore a double armour; his spiritual imagination, and strong sense of the absurd. It has been said that tragedy purifies the passions; it is certain that comedy holds them most in check. And as for the blind baby-instinct, which is in ordinary cases the last relic of infancy in youth,—so soon stripped from it, like the latest blossom of the spring,—Rodomant had it not; he had never been like a child,—even in the cradle stamped with prematurity,—indeed, being one of those peculiar and exceptional natures who seem not to grow older, but younger, as they advance in years. An almost cynical indifference to woman was the angel of Rodomant's life, a stern and uncompromising genius, albeit good, engendering in him an exaggerated idea of what woman ought to be. That men should err in the act of gaining experience, seemed to him natural and necessary, if not right; but he also held the

opinion, that woman must be perfect, or her spell were broken; higher than the angels a little, as man was a little lower. A purism peculiar in one so ardently imaginative, and which in puritanic Scotland might have made him a proselyte, (for one phase of his being) to the most detestable of sectarian creeds: but which in profligate Parisinia clothed his soul with safety, as asbestos sheathes the frame from fire.

Still, for escape there might have been a struggle; the flame might have scorched, though it had no power to consume, but for the suddenness—equal to the completeness of the revelation. An introduction step by step; an initiation, hint by hint, and he might for a moment have bent the knee to Baal, have worshipped one hour the corruption Sense had deified.

Directly he entered, he had diverted himself by looking at all the women. This was natural, and also natural that at the first glance he should admire them inexpressibly—they were so gay yet so gentle; all talked so easily, yet in such light, low tones. For it is an error, of general acceptation nevertheless, that the women of Parisinia are rattles, that they have no repose of manner,

and possess uncommon vivacity instead of common intelligence. Now, it is a fact, that the women of the lower orders, if illiterate, are all gossips in all the countries of Europe; and it is to be hoped that the educated women of every other country, leave to England the loud talk, louder laughter, and very slight self-possession which are modern fashions among the English fair. But the refined women of Parisinia are not only ideals of taste, but models of tact also; for they enchant without beauty, and almost always without grace; they smile by Art, make love by Art—their whole lives testify to Art's abuse, when violently separated from Nature, whose monitions govern conscience, for the pure in heart.

Rodomant's companion, still standing by his side, introduced him to several of these women—singers and actresses; one or two writers of epicene repute among general readers, but known as women by famous men. Now Rodomant, though self-cultured, was no slave to art; he served it in a free spirit, and had ranged the superficies of modern universal literature as those of his social station are able to do in no country as in Germany. He had read, therefore, the finest translations into its all-ennobling tongue;

but for French novels he had no taste—with one exception; a tale with its scene laid in Germany, dedicated to the two holiest subjects in his young esteem; the development of musical art, and the philosophy of lawful love—a perfect book, perhaps the most perfect romance that ever issued from the press in any country. Rodomant had thought it written by a man, for a man's name was on its title sheet; but he learned this night that it was a woman's, and that its authoress was present. Soon she passed him—a woman of a noble countenance, almost a divine expression; eyes the thoughtfullest and brightest, almost an infantine innocence beaming from her splendid brow. Almost, and where not quite, what was the thing wanting? He knew not, yet felt as he gazed; but it was something *not* wanting in her books, for therein Art supplied the loss of Nature.

Still, Rodomant's interest was seriously excited; he took pains to question his companion; he expressed ignorance, and a desire to be enlightened, little dreaming what he should hear. For he learned, in about half an hour, that as for that woman, not only the man she lived with, on whose arm she leaned, was not her husband,

but that she had a husband also. That, of the other women, not one present was the wife of him to whom she seemed one. It was no exceptional infraction of a law as natural as it is moral —no isolated instance of marriage through hatred dissolved, by the law of Nature greater than that of custom; but it was in Parisinia, literary, dramatic Parisinia, Society's exemplar— the rule of life.

Now, after his communications, made with smiling lips, in calm tones, as though he spoke of what must be, and therefore should be, the literarian expected a bow or assent of sympathy, at least, if not an outburst of free and frantic sentiment. But even he, accustomed to every shift of the mask of mannerism, started at the dark disapprobation which gathered to the brow of his young listener, the flash of his eye, like lightning through a cloud, the unmistakeable recoil, though there was no movement of the head or limb. Was Rodomant a pupil of Ventura, and yet the composer of an opera the most secular, if not profane? Nor could the older and more unhappily experienced set down the strong antipathy of the younger to his green and pliant youth; his frame was too sturdy, if not

robust, his facial lines too strong, his eye too keen and angry.

Rodomant from that moment hated his position, and longed to change it; so did the other, and a chance soon favoured both. There had been neither music nor dancing until that moment, at the absence of which Rodomant had been too absorbed to wonder. But now, under a delicate but sweeping touch, a pianoforte began to sound — somewhere in the arch-separated saloons—though the player could not be perceived. It was one of those modern pianofortes which a bravurist knocks to pieces in the course of one concert. No bravurist presided here, but of what school of art the performer was a student, or master, Rodomant could not guess; he had never met with such a one before. The performance was a measure in triple time, neither mazurka nor waltz, resembling both in its subject, but too fleetly hurried into a maelstrom of chromatic harmonies, the embryos of a hundred ideas born prematurely and dying formless —or rather subsiding each into each, effectless— as water blends with water. It brushed past Rodomant's strong and healthy brain like a chaos of the faintest echoes, a whirl of the phantoms of

perished sounds; but to the morbidly rarefied perceptions of the rest present, it was a seizure of violent excitement, a sudden mania for universal motion. Every couple present slid as it were into each others' arms—waltzed, but it can hardly be called waltzing—they seem blown in circles by gusts of impulse, while wider and wider spread the meshes of the melody, and closer and closer grew the threadings of the accompaniment, a web of witchery no easier for the enchanted to break than Maimouna's silken line.

Rodomant was not enchanted, he gazed with contempt, too lofty for the occasion, on the gyrations of the possessed. Suddenly, and, as it were, between the spokes of the wheeling vision, he perceived an apparition contrasting by its calm, with the active frenzy of the crowd. A man, standing perfectly still, his figure darkly defined against the rose-coloured silk curtain which was dropped between the farthest arch and the recess where the instrument was placed; for Parisinia's last new art-toy, her pet pianist, was far too fastidious and nerve-tortured to endure the gaze of the multitude. Now Rodomant was attracted to this man, as he believed, solely because he was

standing still, and the only person present who appeared able to keep still besides himself; and as Rodomant always acted on impulse, though he was unaffected by the impulse to waltz, he walked straight out from the wall to join him whom he admired, only because that being was behaving like himself. Rodomant took no pains to avoid the dancers; on the contrary, he maliciously hoped that he might trip one or two of them up—no such thing—the tact of Parisinians permeates them from head to foot; they *never* trip either in address or step, and all they did was with seeming unconsciousness to shrink into closer circles as he approached, and leave him a clear path through them. Thus, without the gratification of rendering any one ridiculous, he reached his destination; still dark against the roseate background stood the calm unyielding figure, for the man to whom he was attracted did not lean nor lounge; he stood upright, firm, as if his feet were rooted to the ground; and further, his aspect made Rodomant despise himself, for having glanced at all at the frivolities which frittered the hour; for his countenance was casted with indifference, not contempt, and his eyes seemed shut, so heavily the lids were dropped, nor did

the balls quiver—was he asleep, thought Rodomant—could he sleep standing, like a horse? That question was soon settled, for the moment Rodomant took his stand by his side, as though he meant to stay, the other opened his eyes and turned them, without moving a muscle, to look at him. It was an instantaneous glance—no stare, and the look not lustrous, the eye's light languid as that of the sun when ray-shorn and half-blinded by a summer heat-mist. "Oh, that he would look at me again," thought Rodomant, "does he admire or despise me? and why should I care which?" Why, indeed? he is no musician, nor poet, nor art-enthusiast; men call him visionary, but are visions parents to their own fulfilment? are they built up, dream by dream, into solid towers of pride whose top shall touch the Heavens?

Rodomant cared, because it was a necessity of his soul to care, a necessity suddenly aroused, if not created. As diamond cuts diamond, so does genius recognise genius, and it only, with utter appreciation. A man of genius may be flattered by the admiration of the crowd—that is not recognition; it is that the real gem resembles the counterfeit as the counterfeit mocks the real; the

crowd will acknowledge either, and mistake very easily the one for the other. But with the admiration of the crowd true genius is never satisfied; by its peers alone will it be judged, only accept *their* sentence. For genius *knows* that with its brother genius dwells no envy—only a great and loving jealousy, which urges the brother to loftier flights of imagination, and profounder utterances from the oracle of wisdom: a jealousy pure as that of the prophet, "jealous" for the honour of the most High.

Never had any man—and only one woman—attracted Rodomant before. Never had he before been mastered, for none could master him but his superior in ambition—not music. He did not know this, any more than he knew that he was subdued; had he known it he would have burst away. And his ignorance of the spell set upon him proved its strength. There was a likeness between him and this man—a singular resemblance, and yet a difference more remarkable. Rodomant perceived the likeness, and was delighted to observe that he was no plainer than the stranger—on the contrary, the stranger was plainer than he. They were both the same height to an inch, both small and spare, both of

the strongest make; but the stranger looked as if his muscles were wrapped close together, and rivetted with iron; in Rodomant the articulation was constantly perceptible from his constant restlessness. The stranger's hand was small as Rodomant's, but stiff and still, yet, looking even in repose, as if its grasp could strangle; Rodomant's had the free fling of the practised musician; it hung light and loose from the wrist. On both their faces lines of nervous suffering were drawn; but Rodomant's assisted in the caprices of expression, for they melted and reappeared according to his moods of pleasure or disgust; the stranger's were carven like hieroglyphs on granite, and as mysterious; calm and endurant, but not to be translated by men. His brow was swart, yet sallow—darkly pale, darker by multitudinous shades than the keen heights of Rodomant's noble forehead, yet square like that forehead at the base, and sloping instead of rising—like *his* —into hair without curl, but waving, short and wirily, all over; while Rodomant's tossed here and there, finely fluttering in every breath. And certainly in detail, the features of both differed decidedly enough; for Rodomant's nose, though powerful and fastidious, was short and

not large; that of the other was far too large for beauty, with a wide nostril breathing subtlety, yet strange to say, fastidious too. As for Rodomant's mouth, its thin lines were clear to the eye; but that of the stranger remained, even to Rodomant, a mystery, for not a trace of it was perceptible under the immense thick-trimmed moustache; though the chin and jaw—the stronghold of volition — were shaven as smooth as Rodomant's. And *therein* reigned the likeness supremely, both were so strong, so solid, with an expression at once austere and eager.

But the eye—that sun and centre of expression—differed more from Rodomant's than the whole firmament of eyes in the room that night; strange eyes, of no colour that eyes should be, of no colour save the colour of the sea, yet neither its deep blue calm, nor its sparkling sunny emerald; but the hue of the heavy waves rolling sullen beneath a sea of cloud; the green not clear, but turbid, and the foam not white, but grey. And gloomy as the sea-hung cloud, there haloed the eyes a rim of deep brown shadow, imparting to each iris an intense softness, in which the pupils seemed not to rest but float. Further, this man was dressed, like Rodomant, in

black; like Rodomant, he wore neither ribbon-end nor order-bauble, and his air, whether real or assumed, was of as utter simplicity as Rodomant's. But again there interposed a contrast between their modes of address, between Rodomant's reckless ingenuousness where he took a fancy, and the others impregnable reserve. This final dissimilitude piqued Rodomant to his most audacious behaviour, which was in fact his best, because most natural.

"Well," said he abruptly, in bad Parisinian —grammatically bad, as he had only picked a few sentences out of a pronouncing dictionary. "This is the true black or unlawful Art, and what do *we* here, assisting at its impious rites? What has bitten them all?"

"A spider, I believe they call it," answered the other, slowly and between a slow half-yawn.

Now Rodomant had never heard of the tarantula. "Quite a mistake," he said, "it is a member of a society of apes, with an Englishwoman for his mother. Some missionaries—Moravians no doubt"—this with a private domestic sneer—"made a settlement in the monkey-islands, carrying with them a pianoforte, and an old maid apiece for each pug, as bribes. And havign

baptised and trained *one* of the offspring, packed it off to Europe for exposition, on purpose to foil *me*."

"Surely you are no artist?" questioned the stranger, in a dubious tone.

"What else should such as *I* be?" growled the other.

"I asked for information; but you *look* like a man of sense—you suggest wit also, and a knowledge of the world—but above all you look *sensible*."

"And why *not* an artist and also a man of sense, wit, knowledge of the world—how an artist without?" Here Rodomant blundered into German. To his surprise the stranger went on in German too, easily, if lazily pronounced.

"It is simply impossible; I do not speak of mediocrity, or the perfection of mechanic skill, but of a king-artist."

"Right term," nodded Rodomant: "Dear me, are you also one?"

"Quite another, the farthest from it, but I comprehend the principle of all dominant aspirations—to be first, or die. I was going to observe that one man can only succeed well in one thing—can only be perfect through concentration—that is, can be *but* one."

"Well," said Rodomant, "and what is God?" reverently, yet innocently, using the world's name for the Supreme, as the German-child uses the Christ's name, child to child. The stranger, who of all races least favoured German, *looked* dubiously, as before he had spoken; he lacked the fluency of Rodomant.

"I will answer you," said the latter, who could not bear to wait—"God is Love. And yet in that word who dares to say that all attributes of good and genius are not comprehended? Power to create and destroy; to try the pure, and judge the base; retribution and reward in His right hand and in His left."

"Stay," said the stranger, "I cannot follow you, you are out of your depth, or *I* am drowned in the shallowest. I merely meant to convey—for actually it is but an accessory, at the best, of which we are treating—that one man can only do one thing well."

"And you suppose, sir, that Art, as you call it, is but one thing? Creation is progressive, though Nature is permanent. The seasons are born fresh every year; we change our bodies once in seven, yet all *remains*, for the chain of facts as of ideas is ever consequential, yet incom-

plete, as Time is incomplete without Eternity, and Eternity has *no end.* Artists are nearer Heaven than most men, for they best carry out the notion of continuity."

"I give it up," said the other, "for if I was nearly drowned before in the depth, I have now nearly lost my breath in the rarefied height of your metaphysics. But I value art's amenities, and if I were *at the head*, would encourage them — they should be the luxuries of the poor as they are necessaries to the luxurious rich."

"Condescending," said Rodomant, "but as you are not *at the head*, as you call it, nor likely to be in a position to command *me*, it matters just nothing. But what do you call amenities? what we have just heard?"

"I have not heard a note, I did not listen."

"I would *make* you listen to me."

"I have heard you already."

"You mean Alarcos?" asked Rodomont, pettishly. "Well, if you don't like that, and can't enter into it, and don't allow that *I* am at the head there, why it is of no consequence what you think, and I have rendered myself ridiculous for the first time in my life in talking to you, and it is

what I deserve for coming into company, which I detest as I hate the devil, and where alone it seems to me one meets nim."

"But I *like* it, I *enter* into it, I allow you at the head *there.* I feigned at first, for I wished to see whether any one so suddenly exalted could be sincere and sensible; for I do hold to my first opinion, that without sense a man never consolidated a design, nor met save with furtive successes. But more than this; listen—I, who never thanked a man before, I am grateful to you, for *you have helped me—you have shortened my way, perhaps by many steps.*"

There was such intense meaning in these few words, that they tortured Rodomant's taste for the mysterious. "Tell me—tell me!" he called out, and stamped upon the floor, though the stamp was smothered in the thick-piled mat on which he stood, and gave no sound. And he glared his grey eyes upon the stranger. But the stranger made no sign, the cast as it were slipped back over his countenance, down fell the lids, expressionless as sleep; and Rodomant felt that he might as well address, expecting an answer from, a stone.

CHAPTER IV.

At that very moment, the lady of the house,—for there was a lady of the house, though no master,—came up to Rodomant, requesting him to play. And it struck Rodomant, intuitively, that it had been *her* approach on the cessation of the playing and the dance, which had restored the stranger to his indifference. Of course Rodomant was gratified at this suggestion of his own sagacity, for the other had meant then to confide in turn, though yet he knew not what! But he thought only to surprise the stranger into emotion, how to draw from his brain one tear, even though it should dry before it fell; he longed to melt for one instant his unrelenting mood. So he obeyed the lady's request; otherwise, he would have bluntly refused it.

So he stepped within the rosy silken flutes, not looking back, for he would have disdained to show his desire, but desiring, and expecting, the stranger would follow him, which was not the case. Behind the curtain was a sort of impromptu green-room; many of the initiated into whatever mystery had last been advertised and explained in Parisinia were already there, clustered like drones round the author of the last hour's "sensation." Rodomant glowered upon them all but the latter, and would have chiefly scowled in his direction, but for his aspect. He, the player of the spider-dance, lay on a couch in a half-dislocated heap, exhausted, nerve-wrung. One lately dragged from the rack could scarcely more wildly writhe; not a gleam of spirit redeemed the morbidity of the countenance; it was like a skeleton clothed on with shadow, that frame worn down with the constant and grateless effort to maintain the charlatanic efficacy, the white magic of those wasted fingers. Rodomant had not been far wrong when he likened him to an ape highly cultured—still an ape in extremity might excite even tears of pity; but not in Rodomant, whose great fault was that he could not compromise, even when a concession was due on charitable grounds.

He found, as he had expected, that the instrument was not tone-worthy, as he would have expressed it. But what was that to one whose tone-generating touch had called up the phantoms of sound in their sweetness, as they had breathed of old, from the hollows of organ-pipes in which the winds had died? Here was a task more difficult, then,—easier *for him* to accomplish,—who cared to accomplish none that were not difficult, and for others than himself impossible. And he played only for one person; therefore his judgment, true to intuition, enforced him to play in the simplest adaptive style. He chose a pastoral movement, for the inartistic ear is attracted by art suggestive rather than creative; and beneath his breathing fingers the leaves danced lightly, soft gusts swept the rustling grass, in the midst of a multitudinous warble the passion-saddened nightingale dropped tears of melody, the low pathetic bleat of distant flocks, the small sharp cricket chirp, the milkmaid's troll, all chafed the ear at once, and now and then the huntsman's horn, the hounds' wild, wailful cry, shivered through the voiceful calm, then died as into the distance, and seemed to leave nature to its joy. And soothing as nature to the world-wearied poet

was this, its successful imitation, to the player ; he had meant to affect one other only, but he had played himself into a mood of rare content, and cared not the least for those polite countenances, the contempt of whose owners he perceived as distinctly as one sees through transparent glass ; nor would he have cared if he had heard with his earthly ear their dismissing verdict in respect of his playing—not his distinct dramatic genius—the verdict being *rococo*, older that was than the memory of any present, a memory not permitted in etiquette to extend beyond yesterday—a literal yesterday in Parisinia.

Rodomant returned to his corner. The man he had designed to melt was gone. Not into the crowd, one glance showed that among ten thousand, he could not have concealed himself. Had Rodomant then struck the rock? and breaking up the fountains of his heart, driven him for sacred shame "to his chamber to weep there?" Or had he vanished directly Rodomant left him, an alternative flattering to the man as degrading to the artist, since it proved the interest to have been excited by the *person ;* and indeed this possibility reconciled Rodomant to the fact of his being a stock more soul-less than

the stones that danced for Orpheus. Stung by curiosity to an irritation which made it impossible to remain in that languid atmosphere, he felt that he must question *some one*, and unconsciously hastened to the likeliest person, the gentleman who had introduced him there. This gentleman was enraptured in a quiet way, to see Rodomant return to his side, not only because it had been inconvenient to him to come—for the Parisinians are perfect in politeness, if they know not heaven-born courtesy—but because he had in progress four romances, six editorial leaders, and three plays, for more copy of all which about a dozen printers' imps were to call at noon on the morrow.

They passed silently down broad stairs into the street ; the broad, beauteous street, now covered with its pitying veil of moonlight, for the illuminations, waxing sick when Rodomant left the theatre, had died out since, leaving no trace of their glory but a scent of rancid oil-smoke. Still Rodomant rejected the cigar offered by his companion, who seemed as though the end of his existence were answered, not in covering as many sheets of paper, but in consuming as many cigars as possible in the shortest possible time. Not

that Rodomant could not have smoked, but he was a true epicure, and preferred the bouquet of choice tobacco to its flavour; besides, he was now pre-occupied, and dreaded lest there should not be time for a full gratification of his curiosity.

"What is the name of the man who did not make a fool of himself?" he enquired, when his companion had puffed a few times.

"Sir," replied the other, removing his cigar as though he cared not for it, and in that inimitably polite tone with which a Parisinian offers or responds to an insult: "sir, there are in Parisinia no fools."

Then Rodomant sneered at the moon, for looking down on that Babel of bright conceits. "Oh, he said, "I mean the man who did not dance, the man about my make, in the corner against the red flap."

"The little man who could not dance—oh yes, I can tell you." There was a delicate slight of Rodomant's own personality in this description, for Rodomant had spoken of the man as his own make, and Rodomant had not danced; actually, though not because he could not, it was a fact that he had never tried. And thin-skinned as are the sensitive youth of genius, he felt the

slight. Before he could recover himself or reply, the literarian went on.

"In effect it makes one laugh a little. He whom you denoted as the only wise man, was the only fool present. Just now they hand him about for being a fool who has done a clever thing. Nothing can equal the stupidity of that small personage except his insignificance—shown in this: that though he got out of prison only a week ago, imprisonment too for a state offence, really such as a child might perpetrate in kicking the crown on its cushion in the closet; the king has pardoned him the escapade, and engaged to let him go free, on condition that he stays out of Parisinia."

"But he is in Parisinia *now*," said Rodomant.

"The king does not know that, and it is one among many things he does not know."

"How then? you are honourable although you are his enemy, you keep his secret for him?"

"Do you suppose," said the stranger, in a sibilant whisper, after staring all round him for several minutes—"Do you suppose that because I am *his* enemy, I am the king's friend? I hate him, I detest them both, both the galvanised skeleton and the skeleton that cannot obtain

enough fluid to set him going. I hate all skeletons of royalty. It is delicious to hate—to love palls after it!"

Rodomant shuddered, he felt rather as though *he* were side by side with a locomotive anatomy, a chill as deadly as if it wandered from an empty vault to supply its wandering tenant with proper nutriment, seemed to glaze the warm fast current of the artist's noble heart. He did not understand the morbid mystery, and shrank from trying to solve it; it was something very different that he desired to know.

"But what then is this man's name?"

"He goes by all kinds of titles for convenience, but only acknowledges to one. He calls himself Porphyro,—in sublime simplicity repudiates a baptismal name. He says he is a captain,—it must be of some mythical militia,—for he belongs to no regiment of Iris; yet has always lived in Parisinia. He confesses neither to father, mother, nor relations, and I fancy has succeeded in convincing himself that he is the offspring of Theogony. He is dull as an English day, dry as a German dictionary, a mummy resuscitated, possessed neither of mercury nor blood. His talk is all epigram, trite as Time; and effete as are his

opinions, he absolutely has not prudence enough to conceal them. He exhibits to every person who is idiot enough to notice him, his wind-eggs on which he has brooded till they are addled, and in every one's eyes will blow his big bubbles, that burst the moment they have air. In fact, he is *star-struck*, a higher degree of madness than the mania of simple moonshine, but quite as harmless."

"What was his offence?" asked Rodomant, quietly, who had borne the one-sided tirade thus far with patience, for fear its point should, after all, elude him.

"Sir," said the other, *striking* his cigar as if it were a colour, yet holding it out at arms-length as though it were the badge of all the tribe of authors. "Sir, his offence is a duplicature, or rather two-sided, after the moral of the gold and silver shield—you recollect the fable?"

"Well."

"Again, our good brother, the author of the Shadowless,' speaks with just contempt of those who treat serious matters as trifles, and trifles as serious matters. Now, the king,"—

"In *his* name!" exclaimed a deep grumbling voice, and from a pitch-black archway sprang an

armed man, and laid his sounding hand upon the literarian's shoulder! Yet how low had been his voice, how hushed his chatter—could any but Rodomant have over-heard that last word single-dropping to a whisper?—it would seem so, and more than one ear, too, for two other figures grew out of the darkness suddenly, and pinioned the arms of him whom the first arrested. The four marched quickly, clattering along the pavement, leaving Rodomant behind them, alone in the moonlight. Exceeding dissatisfaction kept him calm for several moments—now should he *never* know what the strange man's fault had been, for he felt he could never ask *him*, even if he should meet him again. Then he wondered why they had taken the other and left *him*; somewhat pride-stung, for he would rather have gone to prison than not be noticed. But this mood was born and dead in a moment only; he was too sagacious not to return to the conviction that freedom is better than bondage. "What a fool he must be," was the final sum of his musings, "to have walked so quietly along with them; I would have knocked them all down and run away." Still, Rodomant was sagacious enough not to repeat the king's name, even to

his thoughts. The event influenced him somewhat, besides, for on returning to the hotel where he had in the morning engaged rooms, he discovered that what he had seen and heard had given him a disgust for luxury and ease, or rather had rubbed away the bloom from his idea of them. So he disdained to sleep in his elegant bed with the gilded columns, and kicking off his shoes, lay on the doormat till the morning; when he confounded his mother (who was his invariable companion and care) by looking out, in the tallest house of the narrowest street, for the barest attic, fullest of draughts and draught-blown dust. Thereunto he removed ere night, appointing to his mother a room at hand, somewhat more commodious than his own, though quite as devoid as that of the grace which invests outward Parisinia, and shuns all her internal arrangements, except the saloons, which are never complete unless filled.

In his attic Rodomant also found the bare memory rise like an unbidden phantom to his thought, that he was in truth not yet free; the excitement of the night before passing like fumes of a less spiritual intoxication from his brain; he stood face to face with the hard fact of the debt

not yet paid. To pay it became his fixed idea; his pride nourished and kept it living. Now it was of no use, as he directly discovered, to produce his matchless minstrelsies of the soul to the ivory key, for no one would just then buy them; no, nor his imitations of imitation—that market was monopolised by the pianist, who had last bitten the Parisinians, and Rodomant's plain sense told him it would be as impossible for him to excel the other in *that* craft, as to supplant the reigning ballet queen in her own slippers. Not long, however, had he to *wait* that he might work, knowing what work was to the purpose—in Parisinia they live so fast that the hour is the moment, and with the moment came the man. He had not to wait, for that morning, that moment of the hour was he in request. And if a factory-child were to be paid a month's wages for a single day's work, it would not be more simply astonished than was Rodomant, when the receipts poured in upon him; positively to be paid for what, instead of hard work, was one whelming superfluity of intense delight, for he had but to conduct, night after night, his virgin opera, making whatever strictures he liked upon the singer's voices, exalting the orchestral perfecti-

bility to an empyrean in which the critic could not breathe, so long as he consented to be paid for *himself* conducting it; and, so eccentrician as he was, attract full houses as an additional novelty amidst the surfeit of yet unexhausted horror. So, by day, it happened that Rodomant rested and meditated, as one might do in the express train at full speed, for such seemed his suddenly eventful and teeming life to be. And now he suddenly became, not only a mind, but a person, constantly in request, a condition as flattering to the proud who yet know not the world, as to the vain who know the world. To do Parisinia justice, her leaders would quite as soon visit her heroes and idols in garrets or cellars, as in golden saloons, only the inhabitant must be either heroic or adorable, the *first* of the class he represents, whether artist in sugar, or idealist of crime. Every morning brought cards and notes to Rodomant, and would have brought visitors, but these were as incessantly refused admittance; this again put down to the charge of intentional originalism, whereas they were not admitted simply because the inhabitant was now too actually independent to bear to sacrifice his independence, for he had no notion of making himself a difficult and there-

fore more desirable acquaintance. The little man who could not dance, the man with the imperial-sounding name, and doom of insignificance, had not been incorrect even had he *said* as well as thought, that a man musician could be a man in no popular and conventional sense. For Rodomant up there, knew nothing of that which the raggedest street-sweeper, the starveling of an operative with less time than he for self-emancipation from the bondage of ignorance, knew perfectly, while their steady eyes watched faithfully, if very wearily, hoping for respite at the end, or rather at the beginning of the new. Nothing knew Rodomant—the luxurious art-child, cradled on her bosom softer for her *own* than Nature's even, if not so broad as hers, and soothed by her divine lullabies—of the changes, rapid as though a prism flashed on her instead of the blue constant Heaven, which were passing over Iris and its diamond of cities. Nothing knew he, seated in his cave high upon Olympus, above the cloud and storm, below the sun and starbeam only, of that awful periodic passion, which more dread than epidemy, more wild than war, more secret than earthquake, though as sure, was *returning* from its last rest, to burst

upon devoted Parisinia, seven times already purified by sharper pangs than of fire, or of pain, or of the sword, or nature-spasm, but not yet *pure*.

But if anything can be said to be peculiar to Parisinia, where *everything* is unlike all else in other cities, it is—not the moral volcano over which her genius broods—but the indifference with which her children regard the monumental evidences of past eruptions, and prophesy others to succeed. Delicately as fairies in *their* fairydom, indestructible because immaterial, they dance upon the thin lava crust, green with last spring's grass, purple with last spring's violets. Nay, on that grave of graves they plant their vineyards and their corn, they rear their marts of crystal, besprent with their toy-miracles, their love-tokens of young invention, and the Iris-orbed bubbles of the gentle queen Caprice. Now Rodomant, though he refused to make acquaintance among Parisinians in his single room, disdained not to acquaint himself with Parisinia on her own broad ground, he being besides in too healthy a physical state to endure existence without exercise and air. It may seem strange that he, an artist, should not have found his way

into the matchless picture-house, mausoleum of dead, and princely reception-rooms of living painters, which really seems the only *enduring* crown of Parisinian pride ; but Rodomant *feared* —his passion for painting was nearest to his love for music, as is often the case, and he dared not gratify the former at the expense of the latter. He confined his scrutiny to the shops, and there enjoyed the counterfeit images of many an art-gem, whose original would have enslaved his soul. For say, oh youngest and freshest of enthusiasts ! perusing the counterfeit of the Palace of Art in its shrine "all windows,"—is the Court Alhambra, Alhambra to thy soul ? is Pompeii excavated for thee there ? does Rome breathe ? dost thou swoon joy-stricken, amidst the marble divinities which now real, are ripened from the ghosts of fable that haunted thy classic boyhood ? and even amidst the brilliant development of plant and flower in its garden, that Paradise regained, dost thou shudder beneath the stupendous substances which assume to be shadows of Geology's gigantic world, that Past behind the Past ?

Therefore is Rodomant safe, and for the same reason, is safe from the women of Parisinia, as a poet, even a modern poet, if a true poet, is safe

from the whole revelation of the real Vanity Fair, last named so among men, because first deemed so among angels. It is easy to bring knowledge to men's doors, but they must *seek* for wisdom, and go out of their houses to find it.

Rodomant sneered most impatiently at such shops as he would have termed "bazaars for women," that is, the very toy-miracles and love-tokens of invention, and bright-blown bubbles of caprice; but he ever rested before the print-shops. There are no such print-shops in the whole world. There was one, his favourite, because, as he believed the cause, replenished every day, but really, on account of the delicious taste which spread it; for taste is as ineffable a luxury to the mind, as comfort to the body. The compartments of this window were modelled like the arches of the great cathedral of Parisinia; in each niche stood the model of its enshrined saint, and one or two of the finest proof-engravings published in every city of the earth, lay beneath the shadow of that fairy calendar, changed every day. Rodomant had been bred in superstitious horror of the catholic religion, and since his mature manhood had learned to look upon its results too lightly; the reaction of all super-

stitions in their excess. Those mind-wanderings of macerated monks, light-headed from fasting to starvation's edge; those soft ravings of cloister-caged virgins, dream-bound for lack of dear reality: the yearnings so natural, on the one hand, for wifehood forbidden and maternity repressed, on the other for the material bride and material heaven of home; whose ideal ever is to be crushed down into aching sense like the living buried alive; all these unwritten tragedies were unread by Rodomant; how far less comprehended or even guessed at in their divine perfection,—which only Jehovah knows how to reward,—the exaltations, the humiliations, above all the charities of these living dead, who shall soonest among the living obtain the life through death.

In this shop-window, all were catholic portraits, whether architectural or personal. One morning as Rodomant approached, he noted in a glance, that the whole frontage of view was occupied by a single picture, a portrait too, an immense white margin framing the face and figure of a charitable sister in her weeds of sacred office. This was sufficient for Rodomant, who would have turned to go without looking. As

easily might the poet belated at the evening,—his own sweet time,—determine that he would not look upon the evening-star, full risen in the dusk above him. He may look round, sweep with his adoring eye the whole twilight, whitened with the brightening stars like dew, as soft and tremulous; or the darkling earth where his feet crush the real dew bedropt unseen; but for that one steadfast star, the star that shone before all others, and still shines brightest, if far softer than they all, he *must* turn to it, if only to see that still it shines there, safe in Heaven. So gazed Rodomant upon the passionate yet saint-like visage of the unknown portrait. For that it was a likeness he never doubted; no artist could create the ideal of such a countenance, only the Creator who created all. It was a *new* face, no marvel it was displayed to Parisinian eyes; but whether beautiful or not, Rodomant, as a single observer, did not know, *he* was so new in the sense of its impression, to *all* beauty. But it held him breathless, like a mighty musical idea; a mystery which he yet should reveal unto himself, a silent prophecy. And strange to say, after the first long thirsting gaze was satisfied, he felt excited to

composition, went home, seeing nothing round him, and wrote in his best style, the unsaleable. Next day, very early, he naturally and impulsively went to the same place; there were still the small shrined figures, the crosses garlanded with passion-flowers, the bloomless if undying grave-wreaths, but no nun—in her place some novel delineation of antique martyrdom. Rodomant turned away with disgust too deep for anger. Wandering from window still to window, he started again, then rested at another print shop. Here were crowned heads and mitred foreheads; all the great, the fair, the famous, or the vicious—in the midst the nun. A nun no longer, which fact for an instant staggered Rodomant, as though an instance of human inconstancy. For he called her a nun, comprehending not the distinction between the costume of such a one, and a sister of another order. Soon he forgot to censure, to wonder, even to think; the measure of sensation filled up to the brim by that same first impression, rather than contemplation—he had received the day before. This was a tinted picture, and now she was dressed as a beautiful refined woman dresses before the world, with delicate lace, and pale golden waterlilies in her shaded golden hair.

Still, for that skin so pale yet brilliant, for those star-eyes filled with light that blinded their own hue, for those lips that seemed ready to quiver into a smile, yet refrained as from too full human pity of all the millions who must weep on earth; for all these colour sufficed not, nor art; it was impossible not to believe that the original as far surpassed the portraiture, as the sun his most flaming painted image. But about this, or the points on which a woman-fancier dwells, or a poet moons, Rodomant knew nothing, and knew not that he felt. As far as *external* impression went, he only remarked, so as to admire jealously, that this woman's forehead was finer as well as fairer than his own; for the internal impression, so mastering yet so calm, it again filled him with the imagery of music, evolved tones in his brain to which he listened—as he looked at her, and swept by an irresistible yearning to create, as the day before, he wandered home, that is going not at all straight, but indirectly thither. And would have written, but being out of paper, was driven forth again to buy some, and found that he was haunted. She was everywhere; here again in one window in her sad-coloured raiment, the cloistral calm seeming to float above

a calm far purer in her face, bent as it seemed on an eternal mission; *there* she was on horseback, where Rodomant hated to see women, but where at least this woman looked the most a woman, in the divine contrast of her countenance with her position; and last, full fronting him, she carried a diadem on her brow. From this last picture Rodomant plucked himself away, very angry to find that she was, as he would have expressed it, a queen. After that last look, he would not go near the shops, he was seized with a sudden shame at having looked at all, and at the same moment affected with a curious shyness of his kind, as though his admiration of an object exposed in public were contraband. Nor did he dream of possessing himself of one of these many copies, he felt too keenly their art-deficiency, while his natural pride and reticence forbade him to ask any one for the simplest information about the original. So by a strong effort, which, in one of his unimpaired volition, was sure to be successful, he wiped the picture from his memory, and went to work again. This time having a genuine purpose, if one of little worth in his own private opinion; for he was called upon in frantic yet all courteous terms, to prepare music and

dramatic illustration for an opera, to fill the gap in case Alarcos should suddenly or transiently cease to excite. Rodomant ran his eye through the piece, still the tragedy of terror, the passion murder; and as all tragedy was precious to Rodomant, and any passion acceptable, both suggestive, he consented. In a week copies of the score were ready, for he flung from his hand the blotted scraps, sure that by a thousand imps at art's bidding, all would be made clear without his troubling himself, as certainly he had not found in London.

Soon—a natural result in the case of a mind and character equally exalted above the average, his steady enthusiasm faltered, and his mood subservient to a lower standard of taste and feeling, became one of excitement merely. Meantime his ideal purism retreated from his own perception, still there in its place, the innermost soul of being, just as the stars shine on above a lighted theatre, but those within behold them not; and it seemed as though his destiny—no divine one, if so it doomed him—were to fix him in Parisinia so that he could not move. For there came a white day—a diamond among the jewels of circumstance, as he momentarily and yet innocently

considered it; he was ordered to conduct Alarcos in the private theatre of the king within palatial premises. Loyalty would seem to be a passion innate in all fine natures; perchance a faint reflex of that divine faculty of worship which explains while it assists to keep the first commandment; and though Rodomant was in half-descent from the race ruled specially by Heaven's King, he yet retained the simple susceptibility of the Germans to external impressions; to him a king was not a man like other men, he was the anointed of the Most High; and to his shame be it spoken, for this very reason he was most independent in his deportment on this occasion; he *concealed* his gratification, and obeyed the command as a favour which he could have refused had he chosen. The audience consisted of the sovereign, his wife and children, and the court, and looked like a group ready for an historic painter. Nothing so perfect was ever so unsatisfactory; nothing so elaborate ever so monotonous; nothing so brilliant ever so dull. Still Rodomant enjoyed the event as a child enjoys its birthday regalities and revels, and it was to be his last enjoyment in Parisinia.

On his way home, for he refused to be escorted in a royal carriage, and it went empty to his house

that still the honour might descend upon him, he stepped into a golden retreat for a cup of coffee, delicious as the nectar of the gods. Here, to his surprise, he met the literarian, whom he had never seen since the night of his first introduction, for Rodomant, absorbed in his conductorship, never looked to see who was present at the public performances of his works.

"I will walk home with you," remarked the literarian, "I have something to say."

And Rodomant by this time knew enough of Parisinia *not* to wonder why he did not explain himself then and there.

They went forth. "We shall not be watched *now*," said Rodomant's companion, "they know too well that you have no opinions."

"No opinions!" growled Rodomant.

"No political opinions, and they are the only ones that are alive in Parisinia, alive to be starved, or drowned, or gagged."

"But I have political opinions," said Rodomant, heedless of the ineffable experience that sneered upon him at hand, "I have political opinions, I am very loyal. I always stick to the king, wherever I find myself. I am quite aware that it is dangerous in Parisinia, not to honour the king."

"Fool," hissed the literarian, or rather hissed the first letter of that name in Parisinian which in *Hebrew*, a prince of the house of David forbade brother to use to brother. But most likely Rodomant and this man were *not* brothers, after all.

"Well," said the latter, coolly as frozen courtesy drops ever on the hidden warmth of simple charity. "Do you wish to hear my message for you?"

"That depends on who sent it," observed Rodomant, adding with the self-composure of genius, for which the tact of the man of ten talents is no match, "I don't see how you can have a message from anyone to me, I thought you were taken to prison."

"My dear, a new-laid egg is not more creamed with innocence than you, nor conceals its innocence within its shell unfractured, as do you. True, I went to prison—all fashionable persons so graduate here. Yes, I went to prison, slept very comfortably, and was let out next morning, having been by a slight mistake taken for somebody else."

"Taken for whom?"

"They saw me walking with you, and in the

dark took me for a man you had been seen talking to in the evening."

"A man! have they put him in prison too?" said Rodomant, rather eagerly.

"No, they could not find him."

"No more can I," said Rodomant, in an anxious manner, which let him down to the lowest step of the ladder of the other's various standards. "I have looked for him constantly, sometimes have thought that he might have come to see me, or asked permission. But perhaps, being no artist, he did not dare."

"He cares now, it seems, enough to send for you, if not enough to come after you himself. I saw him only this morning."

"Is he here? and how do *you* know, if no one else knows? Why should he tell you?"

"Why should he *not?*"

"Because you might repeat, as you certainly seemed to detest him."

"Not so; being sworn adversaries in opinion, we are for each other the safest friends."

Rodomant did not understand this, and scorned to enquire, for he cared not in truth to know.

"I was happening," remarked the other, "to speak of your last work, and Porphyro asked

whether it was like the first? I replied that it resembled such fragments as you might have disdainfully discarded after pruning the first; warmed up."

"A lie," said Rodomant.

"The greatest compliment," said the other; "I thought you had cooked it so, on purpose. Parisinia, like the old clothesmen in the wilderness, has long loathed light food; she has a present appetite for flesh-meat, cooked *not* after the Jewish law; by and bye she will loathe cooked meat, and tear raw quails to pieces with her teeth. You have merely studied the taste of the times."

"Disgusting nonsense, worthy of a madman with a nightmare! I am thankful at least, to be no *writer;* there are no eternal laws for language, as for music."

Rodomant restrained himself at this point—not really reverencing his tormentor, and fearing to lose the information it seemed he alone could give him.

"So he sent me a message—give it me."

"I happened, as I said, to mention you, and he clapped his hands once, saying with his eternal triteness, 'The slave of the Ring.'"

Now, nothing would have made it endurable to Rodomant to be called even sportively, a slave, saving only the implication that he was the genius of boundless means. And Rodomant had read Aladdin over and over, since childhood, and more shame for an artist, had often wished himself in Aladdin's place.

"What does he mean I am to do for him?"

"Scarcely likely he would tell *me*. He wants to see you; asks you to go to him."

"Where is he—his address?"

"Which I cannot speak nor write, *as* his address. Go simply to the little glove-house, where they take casts of your hand. Go to the first man on the left side, and extend your hand; ask nothing, except three dozen pairs, what colour you choose, you will have them given you as a present."

"What glove-house?" asked Rodomant, who, as we know, only knew by heart the picture-shops. His companion in indirect language indicated which.

So Rodomant went there, instantly; he could bear suspense (on small occasions) little better than a child. The glove-house was full of people, who were passing backwards and for-

wards from a glass-door beyond, communicating with the chamber of the modellist. The person to whom Rodomant, speechlessly, extended his delicate member, bowed low, and preceded him as though through the glass-door like the others; —a small square corridor led inside by four doors, four ways at once, dark except for the semi-gleam through the silk-shaded glass-door. Rodomant's conductor opened the door next that in the corridor, through which the others entered; and having let him in by holding it just wide enough for him to pass, departed without sign or word of introduction. He found himself in a room of tolerable size, furnished like a hundred small saloons in Parisinia, with large windows looking full to the widest street; and the king's central city palace, glaring pale upon it from not afar, but the nearest approachable point permitted to inferior abodes. There was a man sitting in one of these windows smoking, and destroying time by the perusal of pictorial newspapers. Not Porphyro, Rodomant felt without looking. In fact, it was Porphyro's servant, who abroad personified the master of the floor, and who promptly ushered Rodomant, still without a word, into an inner cabinet, or rather closet, in

which sat Porphyro, who personified his own servant abroad, and sometimes even at home. Close shaved now, with all but the shadow of hair swept from the mouth and chin, and with the forehead something lowered, and form of the head disputed by an exquisitely indetectible wig; yet Rodomant knew him instantly, would have felt, if he had entered with his eyes shut, that absorbingly powerful presence. Without knowing why, Rodomant eagerly examined the room; every article in it was suddenly perfumed with interest for him. He beheld simply a small iron bedstead, very rusty; a table and two chairs, a small high window, affording a peep of blue sky. On the table, at one end, for it was a long one, were an inkstand with pens, the usual implements of a draughtsman, and a colour-box with brushes, but no easel. The other end of the table was occupied with a mysterious sheet of the thickest cardboard, covered with what looked like either a large microscopic picture, or a tinted map lettered infinitesimally. It startled Rodomant out of his slight natural propriety, and without greeting, he commenced, saying solemnly,

"Is that a horoscope? Are you then a fate-caster?"

The other smiled the smile peculiar to his countenance, a dim quaint smile, as of one who had secrets with his own inner man.

"A little of a fore-taster, perhaps."

Then he took from his pocket a strong magnifying glass, and put it gently into Rodomant's hand. Rodomant grasped it, and through it gazed long and eagerly. And from that hieroglyphic mist there started, sudden and distinct as morn without a cloud, a brilliant bird's-eye view of a superb and stupendous city, a dream of imaginative architecture, almost in itself a poem. Each house of each street, each lamp and fountain, each line of road and pavement, marked as vividly as the glorious domes, the pointing pillars, grand gates and arches, proud palaces in enclosures of solemn leafage, the bridges traced like webs of shadow, the stately terraces and dim cathedrals. Green groves and avenues, and vivid gardens, interlaced and divided the city within the walls, and without masses of delicate shrubbery, as perfectly defined, were studded with fair villas of every varied form, melting gradually and peacefully as it seemed, to a bright champaign embroidered with fence and hedgerow. Rodomant struck his

forehead with one hand, in the other retaining the glass. It seemed a sort of visionary pageant unrolled to him, partly memorial, in part prophetic. He knew he had seen something like it, but when and where? What planet boasted that star of cities, for strength and lustre that must surpass new London and old Thebes? For Rodomant had the mathematical gift of all the highest harmonists, and his brain could magnify and actualise the elfin-sized images under his eye to their just and proper proportion in the real.

"You know it?" asked Porphyro, in his intentional, if hesitative, accents. Rodomant shook his head, flung down the glass, and as one momentarily dazzled, passed a hand before his eyes. "Oh, perhaps not possible," said Porphyro, "for you shut yourself up, I hear. Quite right, if one would study—it is the only way to put *oneself* in prison, unless one's fellow-mortals do it for one. In prison I learned to draw, to colour, to design, and to anticipate; anticipation is the colouring of design."

"Not hope?" asked Rodomant, childishly and something wistfully—he, the great artist, was as an infant beside that inartistic man.

"Hope is but the painting of the rainbow, anticipation the colouring of the painter, or foretaster, as I said before. The one fades, at least melts, into blue monotony; the other endures until fulfilment which, and which only, sweeps away its last vestige—Prophecy,—what will be, and which therefore it is easy to wait for."

"And this wonderful picture," added Rodomant, not in the least comprehending his companion's drift, and too subdued to ask it—not, for the first time, not too proud.

"That poor plan is the design of Parisinia, as it will be, as I shall make it, if I live."

"Will there be a fire or an earthquake, then? what pity, and yet?—"

"Neither fire nor earthquake."

"A war, then; they will pull it to pieces, as they tried to do once before—a war within walls?"

"There will be war, but not *then*: war within walls, but before that. They may even try to pull it to pieces, and in part succeed—"

"And you, you will rebuild it, then; you are the king of architects, and the King will employ you."

"I am not the least of architects, nor will the

King employ me. Let us roll up this paper, for fear of any one coming in, to whom it would not please me to show it, as I have done to you. Then, next, I have to ask you a favour."

Fifty questions quivered on Rodomant's lips; not one made a fluttering escape; every instant he passed with this being so obscure in his simplicity, subdued him more and more. Porphyro, meanwhile, began to roll the map up slowly; Rodomant still watching him. And watching him, perceived for the first time, that he wore on one finger a ring. This ring fascinated Rodomant, it was so peculiar; its small oval gem, neither diamond, nor emerald, nor amethyst, nor ruby, possessing a sort of opal gleam—yet the gleam itself cast from a form within the oval, resembling a minute head. Instinctively, Rodomant snatched the magnifying glass. Haunted! and in *this* place, on *that* man's hand. It was the smallest, yet in expression the divinest portrait of the haunting angel he had yet seen. Every feature—as he felt, without seeing the original—more like than any in the shops, more perfectly because more delicately delineated, and every line conserved with spring-like freshness—a fairy gem of gems. Why did not Rodomant, with his

native ingenuousness and impetuosity, enquire of Porphyro the name of the haunting angel? Porphyro seemed to have little reserve on the subject, for he rested his hand upon the roll as if to display the ring more fully, and the lids of his eyes dropped closer, as if pressed upon by an intenser pride than usual. Doubtless, he only required asking, or thought that Rodomant knew. But Rodomant, as we have before remarked, had his ungodly moods, and his sensations shifted on the instant to their least celestial frame; he felt suddenly, and for the first time, jealous, and in so strong and unperverted a nature jealousy is like despair, it can neither be expressed nor modified; and further, his pride would have bidden him perish rather than ask Porphyro, whose resemblance the ring retained, or how he had become possessed of it. Of course, Rodomant went on to himself remarking, it had been bought, for if one could purchase large portraits, little ones were no greater marvel. And then, it started into his mind that it little became one so proud and careless of woman-kind to be jealous—jealous, too, of whom and for what? Let this man, the uglier of the two of us, and possibly the inferior in wits, preserve the bauble on his

lean digit, for I would not if I could, sport the finest jewel to advertise my own effeminacy; so Rodomant ended, or rather halted in his thoughts, for Porphyro again addressed him at this point, and possibly that unexcited, yet most exciting voice, caused the halt, and not a lapse, in Rodomant's own review of the case under his consideration.

"Are you still determined to remain in Parisinia?" asked Porphyro, "like a fair-built ship, which after her trial-cruise, anchors herself in some azure lake under eternal sunshine. I would not have you do so."

I would not have you—a style royal which would from any other lips have made Rodomant long to smite on those lips their owner; and then the taunting analogy, as if he, Rodomant, had ever idled away his time, or most of all, were idling *now*.

"I don't see why I should go," said Rodomant, rather in the school-boy style of self-defence; "they pay me very well, and I am sure I work hard, and not all the nonsense and extravagance they display here have even tempted me to commit the least error."

"For those very reasons I want you to go, and

for others better and more solid, positive ones, not negative."

"I don't see what you can care about it for, or why *you*"—Rodomant could not bring himself to say interfere, so he added, "interest yourself in me; you are no manager, and you are not a millionnaire, nor even the lowest artist, and you are certainly not a king."

Porphyro's pallid lips half parted, as though he were about to smile, here—then sharp closed tighter than ever, as though afraid to relent so far; but Rodomant remarked neither the one expression nor the other, he was quite guiltless of any peculiar charm that for this man the regal idea possessed.

"I am, as you say, not a king, but I possess influence with many who rule, and it is of one I would speak to you, but not just yet. First let me inquire whether our mutual friend who arranged the scripture of your *last* opera—the one you have composed lately, I mean—has yet called upon you again about another?"

"He has called often enough. He always is calling, but not about another—what other?"

"The one they want you to write next."

"On the same subject?"

"No; and that is why I forewarned and wished to speak with you."

"What subject, then?"

"Two in one."

"Like your offence," remarked Rodomant, in an under tone, hoping that Porphyro would hear him, and that so he might get at the truth which yet eluded him. No such thing; Porphyro only gave a sort of hard sigh, his utmost token of irritation at being interrupted.

"What subject?" again cried Rodomant impatiently.

"There is love in it, and passion, no murder this time, but of virtue, and that self-murdered."

Rodomant doubled up his fist, and banged it down upon the table.

"I will not wait another instant unless you are explicit; and for one thing, I am sick of singing suicide."

"Well, and I hope you will then *anticipate* refusal. I was sure, I felt certain, that they would sooner persuade you to offer yourself as a suicidal specimen in the Pavilion of the Dead, than describe in your exalted strains the secession of a married woman from her vows, which are her virtue."

"Adultery, never! May my hand wither and my brain be addled first." Rodomant never called anything but by its rigid, however startling, name. Still, though he was entirely and innocently resolved, he felt a sort of chill upon his impulse, not from within, but from without, from that strange being whose last uttered words had left behind them a taunting echo, all but indetectible in the tones themselves; and this impression of finite scorn is one inevitably conveyed, however inadvertently, by those who disown principle, and have no respect for any who by principle are governed; who have neither faith beyond the grave, nor reverence for any who believing with difficulty, shelter themselves in the temporal support of a professed creed. Was there, then, this double spiritual deficiency in Porphyro? Rodomant did not suspect or inquire, and though the chill yet breathed upon him like a sudden-sprung north-wind under a July sun, he was fascinated as much as ever, and as anxious as ever for his companion's drift. He had not long to wait, for Porphyro, doubtless quite ignorant that his last words had produced an unpleasant impression, went on coolly.

"I was sure of that. And now, do you know the consequences, if you should refuse to write for them?"

"Perhaps I should be hissed; perhaps they would not pay me; perhaps—well, perhaps I should be better appreciated after the first shock."

"You are a child—excuse me—you are a child to me, for I am, I believe, exactly double your age. You would certainly not be hissed, certainly not be paid, most certainly the light of Parisinian faces would remain for ever in darkness. All very polite, but frigid as the northmost polar ice-point. You would not be noticed, you would return to primitive, ante-natal insignificance; you would cease to be."

Rodomant stood still, wondering; and wistful in one instant he felt as though he had become dependent; he looked earnestly at Porphyro, but did not speak.

"Now," added the other, "neither you nor I could bear that. You could not bear such non-plusage, and I hate to see anything wasted, more than all, a man who might be a hero if he were not unluckily endowed with musical genius. You must go directly, and make the move yourself. You must give out that you are wanted in higher quarters, as I shall make you necessary. Now here they are tired of the farce of murder, and

clamour for a change in their amusement, to pass the few remaining hours before murder shall be real again, for that is what they wait for."

"But to throw up everything —"

"Throw away a dusty laurel-sprig to pick up a golden-palm branch. Where I wish to send you, everything,—luxury, and love, and religion —yes, and crime, too, are all subservient to art, made subservient by the head of all, whom still, for a little space, his subjects imitate. It is doomed too"—Porphyro added in an altered voice, which, in a sort of self-communion, seemed to retreat into his brain—"it is doomed, but not yet, and I could save you then, for then you would be mine."

Now Rodomant began to differ from the gentleman who had depicted Porphyro, and called his converse epigrammatic. Rodomant began to weary of his mystical tirade, and making a great effort to arrive at a settlement both of his ideas and plans, he exclaimed—"Where am I to go then, for that is the real question?"

Then Porphyro became matter of fact again, his mystical allusions ceased. "It is," said he, "to the court of the Prince Belvidere."

"Well," said Rodomant, "I have heard of

him, and his kingdom is one of the smallest in Europe."

"It costs the most," said Porphyro, in that same cool manner. "And as for him of whom you have heard, you have heard little, if you know not that a caprice of his makes many a career, and one made already, such a caprice will crown."

"Oh, I will go—am I to write and say so?"

"Certainly not, his letter is addressed to me. I wrote to *him*."

"Who are you—what are you, to write to kings, and be written to by them?" cried Rodomant, passionately.

But passionlessly Porphyro returned, with as little expression of voice as in mien. "I am what you see; and as to who I am, you know my name; all that I am and mean lies *there*."

"Porphyro—Porphyro, why that means only purple."

"And what more meaning therein than in red or blue, or white? Seriously, my dear Rodomant, for so I must now take leave to call you, if you resolve to go, I will write directly. Ostensibly, you are requested to conduct your opera; actually, if you choose, you may become a court resident,

for the princess, his daughter, and heiress, requires a pianist."

"I never will again dance attendance on a woman."

"Wait—wait and see, *that* is immaterial, if you do not choose. You will go. I shall write."

"Yes, write, but particularly say that I will not dance—"

"No, no, you shall dance for no one unless you choose. All your expenses will be paid for the journey."

"I shall pay my own expenses. I am rich now, I am no longer in debt."

"You in debt?" exclaimed Porphyro, in a tone of curiosity most unusual with him.

"Only to a woman—one woman."

"Your mistress?" enquired Porphyro, in his coolest voice.

"No," said Rodomant, angrily, with the blush which on a man's face is nobler than on the fairest cheek—"I never had one."

"I thought so," added Porphyro, and said no more, but strangely enough, after Rodomant had left, he sat a minute musing, with a dogged and close-drawn frown, then muttered to himself, "I hope the princess is safe."

CHAPTER V.

The land of the Princess Belvidere was a sunny land, a land of eternal summer, while the earth remaineth; and that summer wedded to a constant climate so delicious, that it seemed to smile to scorn the sultry softness of the malaria-haunted south, and the smiting noon-heats of the tropics. There is no other heaven so celestial-hued as the sky which brooded over that calm corner of the busy earth, and which differed alike from the burning torrid azure, and from the Italian sapphire whose shadows are cast in violet, and whose lights are more melancholy than any moonshine. The sky of Belvidere was the purest and most brilliant rather than the deepest or the brightest blue, its atmosphere warm as life, its

sun fervent as youth new kindled by love; still the freshness of youth seemed abiding with it as well as the vital sweetness, its dews dropped rather like nourishing balm from Nature's bounteous heart, than tears of Nature in her long and late protracted yearning for eternal rest and universal changeless beauty. And the most purifying influence of the elements breathed constantly upon that fortunate shore, for the sea was its loveliest boundary, and added its own fragrance to the thousand souls of perfume that wandered in every wind—no wind wilder than a breeze in Belvidere. That sea was a sea without storms, as the sky was a sky without clouds, its blue was as peculiar, as pure; but deeper and far more clear than the Heaven-veiling mystery of the firmament, for you could look down fathom after fathom of that crystalline azure, and behold, softened to enchantment by the oceanic atmosphere, all its unearthly shapes of life and semi-life, its beautiful and strange inhabitants of flashing fin or tranquil vegetation, its mystic unflowerlike blossoms, and half-transparent verdure, flourishing without fresh dews. And of all that summer-sea, the calmest and clearest bay was as it were reserved, to surround

and set a seal upon the loveliest nook of its shore —the soft slope, on which stood, and had stood for ages of its summer-time, the summer-palace of the princes of Belvidere. That bay no steam-engendered phantom of modern shipping was allowed to approach, nor seemed it haunted ever save by vessels resembling those which the navy of Tharshish once in three years sent King Solomon; by glittering pleasure-galleys; and by whole navies at once, of that fairy of the deep, the pearly-orbed and rose-oared nautilus. The rocks shutting in the bay, showed little of the stern character of rocks, they were covered to the water's edge with rambling shrubs and wild-flowers, which are in the north the choicest treasures of the hothouse, growing freely there as grass in northern fields, in rich but not rank luxuriance. And the palace, which its own gardens only separated from the sea, was a crown of art's beauty to the loveliness of nature, not as palaces usually are, either a blot upon nature's beauty, or a crown of ugliness to a city with little beauty of its own. Its architecture was ancient, of origin oriental, and the only ideal type in architecture existent, that is untampered with by modern taste. And for its furniture, its

appointment, its finish, luxury might be said to have been exhausted on them, were not that, the inventive faculty of selfishness, inexhaustible as selfishness itself.

Rodomant yielded to Porphyro's injunction that he should leave Parisinia, not because he was sick of that city, nor hopeless of further self-distinction, nor even because Porphyro received and replied to letters of princes, but simply because he had met with a will stronger than his own, strong among the strongest as was that will of his. In fact, he yielded much more easily than one of more elastic and slight volition; his broke at once under an adapted touch, where the weaker would have bent, and risen again after the blow had ceased to vibrate. Rodomant, in fact, was subdued like the untutored giant by the agile and artistic athlete. Then, having yielded, his pride caused him to go forth adventurously, and with a good grace, he even entertained his admirers and enviers at a parting banquet provided by those artists who minister to the palate in Parisinia, and was feasted in return, those who envied him the most admiring, and his admirers the most envying, his fate in being sent for to a court which had never sent

for a musician the native of Parisinia. To Rodomant's entertainment, he had the imprudence, out of gratitude, to ask Porphyro—not in person, for he could not get at him; and received such a cool rebuff—not only in the calm refusal, but the assurance that he had done for Rodomant all that was in his power, and could not be troubled again on the subject—that Rodomant would instantly have retracted his intention of departing, but for that same courteous crowd of admirers and enviers, whose genuine gratification at his departure assured him that his work there was over, and his place there no more.

During his journey, idleness, not indolence, took possession of his mind again, and he yielded it to it implicitly. Indeed, there was nothing for him to do; he felt like a child who has just lost one task-master, and to whose home or school another has not yet arrived. Such moods are common at intervals to all minds of genius, except those doomed to an early grave, and to whose incapacity for self-surrender to repose or pastime of the faculties, their death should ever be traced. Rodomant did nothing but enjoy all things that happened, or rather, for the journey and the voyage were alike prosperous and serene,

the very uneventful condition in which nothing happened actually but the lovely changes wrought by shifting atmosphere, and succeeding day and night upon shore and sea. Few indeed of the most poetical imaginations, are capable of enough abstraction to delight in the sea during a voyage by steam. To Rodomant it was just as romantic so to travel as on the wings of the wind, or a roc's wide fabled plumes. No material sound or image interrupted the inward sense, at once visionary and musical, through which he received impressions as actual to him as the snort, the sob, the grime-diffusing vapour, of the steam-ship. He heard alone the deep throb of the sea's eternal pulse, breaking against the bows as against one of its own rocks; he only listened to the rich regular chime of the waves that chafed the keel, the lower, lighter ring of the foam-bells, the constant undersong, lowest of all and deepest, which as few ears hear in the chorus of the sea, as can detect the harmonics in an orchestra. And as poets betake themselves to nature's solitudes, feeding upon her as the only nurture for their souls; for love starves poetry in the poet, and takes its place awhile; so, idle as he

was, Rodomant's imagination, nourished through his ear, was gathering strength and sweetness for future deeds—for there are deeds in art, and those alone survive.

But Rodomant's idleness might have settled into chronic indolence, if it had been protracted longer than it was. For as he approached the end of his journey, his whole nature rose in rebellion, longing to go on just as he was, to lengthen that lapse of spiritual luxury, repose, into all life. It was therefore as well for him that he was compelled to break it off short, and return to that active life which is full of duties for men of every class, differing perhaps with each individual, as well as in every class. Even the apparition of the lovely shore nearest the bay of Belvidere, that paradise of scenery and climate, failed to recall his energy, and that last day he stayed below deck, dividing his time between discontented glances at the oval pictures framed by the cabin windows, and changing every instant; and rolling up his head in a cloak, with his fingers in his ears, to shut out every sound. Even that strange longing crept upon him, which tempts so many sensitive natures when on the verge of a shock of being a change of habits and

associations; he desired at that time to die, to drop off at once easily and for ever, that "mortal coil" which the flesh is bidden by its Creator to wear till the spirits' struggles to *endure*, not be *free*, have fretted the cord to a thread, so thin that one breath, the last, divides it.

But at evening, when the sun, undefiled by mist, set vivid as a diamond below the distant water-line, when the other side, the dilated rising moon brimmed with an undazzling gold the far edge of the duskening paradise on shore, then voices fell lower on deck, hands dropped one by one, the wheel stood still, and the vapour-wreath melted into a trail, that mingled with the stainless air. Rodomant perceived, though yet his ears were stopped, the cessation of all vibrating tremble, the stillness fell on him as a dead pause in a dream, the silence seemed, like too much sound, to stun him. He raised his head, with his now opened ears listened,—not long without a sign. He was called upon, he was wanted, and had he not been abstracted beyond worldly impressions, he might have marvelled, that he was called upon as gently as he was, for he was the solitary passenger to disembark at that point. He went on deck, not hastily, but

pondering as it were over his precise position, as yet unascertained. The vessel lay, heaving gently on the waters, as on its pillow a heart at rest, and like one brought to a certain point in a dream, when knowing it is a dream, one cannot wake, and wonders what will happen next,—awakening, or that crisis which actually to the dreamer never arrives, being *itself* the waking moment; like that dreamer, Rodomant stood, seeing without looking, hearing without listening, full only to his own consciousness of the certainty that he had to land, knowing neither how nor where, when suddenly he heard a low, ravishing cadence: music upon the waters!

Music upon the waters, and soft as though it were but the greeting whispered among reeds by the soft south-wind of that eternal summer. And sweeter, if not softer, as it approached; for then, and not till then, it sighed off into one of his own divinest melodies. He looked down, for so his instinct directed him, and lo! the musicians were at his feet, in a boat delicate and fantastical, which, small as it was, rocked in the gentle but long undulation caused by the larger vessel. The bright brass instruments flashed like gold in the moonlight's golden

clarity, and at that enchanted hour, their tones —the most earthly of all the tongues of music —sounded most heavenly, or so the hearer thought. By magic the boat seemed to have floated thither, for Rodomant, in his extatic trouble, perceived not the rocky point it had lately rounded; and so by magic he seemed to descend into it, for he certainly was not conscious where he put his feet. Soon, very soon, they left the shadow of the brooding steam-ship, which moved again, and put far out to sea. Then sweet sound held all the air alone; nothing could be heard except the golden tongues, flattering the musician with his own sweet spells, and the silvery splashes of the twelve oars keeping time—as sweet if not as flattering. They turned the corner of the rock-curved bay, and then even the slender ripple on the more exposed surface of the sea behind them ceased, —heaven seemed less calm than ocean now, for the stars, their sparkle drowned in the full moon's golden splendour, poured their faint lustrous images on the water as on sheening crystal, and the moon met her golden double there; and it might have been difficult to know which was the real and which the reflex firma-

ment, but for the fleets of the fairy nautilus, playing at peace in that lovelier than fairy light, all round the gliding boat. But Rodomant scarcely saw them—his eyes were strained towards the shore, where far beyond the clouds of foliage, a thousand palace-windows shone, and reminded him of more substantial than fairy favours—more romantic in that mood, to his perception, than the enchantments of dreamy Arabia, and positively to him, in their actuality, more mysterious too.

Rodomant knew not, that it was in fact the undisturbed sway of beauty, unthwarted by any suggestion or shape of discord, that caused his romantic and *real* enchantment. All was so fair, all was—or seemed—so holy; was it indeed then, in spite of the melancholy ravings of world-derided saints, so righteous to rejoice?—and it must be pardoned to Rodomant that he felt awhile as though the suffering, the anguish, the despair of millions through the "few," were but a fable to be flouted.

Beautiful as an Arabian dream, nor knew he how much like a day-reality of old Arabia rose before Rodomant the sweep of the palace steps, the state landing-place of the purest marble,

whose polish the tender climate had but breathed on to render more ingrained and subtle, and with balustrades, whose pattern seemed of snow-enwoven thwarting threads—so finely the marble had been fretted—this sweeping staircase led to a roofed passage of marble also ; and when Rodomant entered it, he betrayed a wonder and an admiration which would have lost him caste for ever, except among the servants of Belvidere, which servants he took for lords, or courtiers at the least, in their dark, velvet-gloomy garments, and with their grave countenances, while they wore at their sides (thought Rodomant) such splendid swords. Little knew he the secret of those grave, grand countenances, or why those swords were worn. The wonder and the admiration of Rodomant were not mis-spent ; the passage was of that same architecture we noticed, and which might be termed of type archaic, but from which of Nature's God-stamped ideas was this, the earthly idea taken? The roof was fretted, too, and through each fret some star-gleam quivered; but between those delicate openings dropped, or seemed to fall, suspended ever, long icicles in marble, not wild and shapeless as the icicles of frost, but of form har-

monious, regular, repeated each by each; and on either side a broader fretwork showed the moonlight, laying the whole scene under the enchantment of her silver-golden wand, while within the fretwork here and there stood orange-trees, and soft lamps hanging over them, revealed their depths of leafage, thick studded with their star-like blossoms and ruby-streaked if golden globes of fruit. Rodomant, who had never seen such trees before, would fain have paused and feasted on their sweetness and their mystery, but between those servants whom he took for courtiers, he dared not, and perhaps the peculiar manner of those persons procured them their reputation, for unlike all servants whom Rodomant had ever seen, they neither stared at him, nor with each other "exchanged eyes;" they also suited their steps to his, as, mazed with the magic surrounding him, he crept cautiously along.

The passage opened to a small hall, at whose entrance two real courtiers—though he knew not the difference—met him. And this hall need not be described, because, at that moment, Rodomant beheld it not—saw nothing but the short and slightly broken line of figures each side a throne at the upper end—or what he thought a throne,

and which was a chair of gold-starred sombre velvet, raised a step on which stood one he feared to look upon, strangely enough, for he was no moral poltroon sick with morbid loyalty, and he had stood untrembling in the regal presence of Parisinia—of Iris—a great kingdom, not a small princedom like this of Belvidere. Yet a cold shudder that hot night seized Rodomant, advancing in a line towards the prince, and though his perfect self-possession—that gift accruing to him by right of his perfect simplicity—kept him in the line, yet he saw nothing but a mist which had with the shudder rushed before his eyes. Now Porphyro had not taught Rodomant a single letter of etiquette, he was too sage; he knew, though he had taken care to hide from Rodomant, that Prince Belvidere held his bosom musician in the light of the extinct court-fool—no matter about rigid manners, if art were inexhaustible, and wit not wanting either — eccentric, or even arrogant, they would alike prevail. So Rodomant walked straight up to the step and bowed, while the prince, who desired to adapt himself to Rodomant's associations, and confounding the habits of his country with those of England, from his knowledge of their historic origins,

held out his hand. But from that narrow white and almost dazzling hand, the mist cleared first before the eyes of Rodomant, nor could he bring himself to touch it: fair as it was, it looked to his vision terrible, nor could he account for his own sensation, which was exactly the same as he had once experienced in Germany, when a medical student had exhibited to him a prize of his—a dead white hand of a gentleman who had murdered his wife, and been executed. So Rodomant, with a sick swell of his heart upwards, choked instead of speaking, which misbehaviour the Prince interpreted into the oppression of over-reverence, just as he took the bow, which Rodomant performed over his hand, for a sign of plebeian homage to the divinity of kings. Attributing also to his own intense fascination the intense, though rapid, gaze with which Rodomant regarded him, the Prince little suspected the intolerable aversion which that insignificant being conceived for his august person. The Prince was peculiarly graceful, pallid but handsome, his dark hair soft as silk, his expression mild; but to that countenance, at once so delicate and so sensual, Rodomant took as deadly a dislike as to the hand. He

would have given the world to be anywhere else; he almost hated Porphyro, whom even in remembrance, he could not *loathe;* a nervous terror seized him. Suppose he should run away down the hall with his back turned; his heart seemed to spin instead of to beat, every instant lengthened ominously; when, not more than a true minute after he had reached the chair, the Prince spoke, in Parisinian, that universal language among those who welcome to courts strangers of whose accomplishments they are not sure. "My daughter," said the Prince, affably, "desires that you shall be presented to her."

Now Rodomant, during his journey, had contrived to forget the princess, nor had she recurred to him when he had beheld her father. What could the child, above all the daughter, of such a parent be? He found time in that moment to enquire of himself, and again he shuddered. But even as he shuddered, a sweet secure sensation, as of an angel hovering over a death-bed, struck through and through him—what was this? He glanced in the direction of the Prince's white waving hand, and then half behind, half beside, the royal chair, he perceived a cluster of ladies; nor was it strange he had not been attracted to

them before, for unlike the courtly women of other countries, they were all attired in black. This group retreated, dividing at the centre, and in the midst !—But again Rodomant was blinded, not by a mist before his eyes, but a tender glory dropped on them, and he sprang rather than stirred a few steps forward, then sank upon both his knees. She held out her thin, unjewelled hand, and without seeing it, by the instinct of adoration he perceived and found it, and touched it with his lips. Kissed the hand of one, the sandal of whose shoe no man was allowed to finger, on pain of death !—Madness, but a madness calm as the moon engendering it; joy, so still, that though it brimmed the sense of bliss, not a drop gushed over at the eyes; love sprung like a sudden rainbow new and perfect on passion's storm-cloud; and passion—oh, how storm-like, yet held by suspense as quiet as the trances of the thunder. All these moods at once steeped the bewildered soul of Rodomant, and now he only felt, oh, that I might kneel here for ever, and so die, with this impression on me! The princess was the haunting angel!

Now any person with a gleam of intelligence over and above ordinary dulness, would have

merely been sensible how naturally it had happened, on seeing a princess, to have seen her picture first; for the swartest queens, the most ignobly-visaged noble among the fair are fond of patronising art in one guise of hers at least; they never object to publishing their portraits, and allowing them to be exhibited in shops as well as galleries, for the benefit of the artists who achieved them. And oh, shameless cynic; ungrateful for the heavenly gift of beauty, Rodomant still kneeling, after that wild salute of his, and in the very depth of his delicious wonder, allowed the suggestion to cross his spirit; what, if after all she is vain with the vanity of women? Then Porphyro's ring seemed to clasp his brain and brighten round it, swelling larger, like the cold coil of a snake—a suspicion, but of what he knew not—seemed as though it must strangle him: when the princess spoke, and the strangling suspicion dropped harmless, like the serpent charmed by music. He looked up, he rose, half-wringing his hands in a fond but inexorable despair. For the very audacity of such a nature saves it—so rapidly conviction follows upon impression. How had he dared to worship, to kneel, to kiss? How dared he look upon *her* and live? blasphemously

he thought of Him whom if a man beholds, he dies; and was perhaps forgiven, so mighty a task it is to learn to love on earth, encroaching not on the love of heaven. Unhappily for him he had permitted himself to dwell on the image of one unknown, as though being unknown, she therefore existed not; and to know her, meeting her, was to divide him from her for ever,—so he instantly decided, not without pride.

But it was so long before the princess spoke, and so long Rodomant had knelt, that all the courtiers—the prince himself also—wondered. When had the serene but distancing dignity of this august girl ever failed? And when at length she spoke, so few and constrained were her words, that her father, judging her by himself, liable himself to the caprices of an insane restlessness, imagined that she had taken a disgust to Rodomant, having had frequent reason to know and to rue her difficult taste in men.

Her "welcome to Belvidere," sounded cold, like sweet bells heard in frost, yet oh how exquisitely sweet, sweeter to Rodomant because he felt as though they dissolved a momentary connection for ever, as the last moments of life are dear, and far dearer than they deserve to be, to

the martyr and dying saint alike. But that kiss, so soft and wild, returned upon him, fell heavy on his heart as lead, his own audacity rushed over him—he himself had annihilated her possible favour, his own possible bliss—oh that he had died first, and at her feet! He believed that he had roused her spirit, quickened to disdain her maiden pride, and at the same instant iced her royal blood with voiceless indignation. Never woman nor princess so vain as in that hour he, and as all the too strongly self-sensitive; he felt far more than the occasion merited, and dropped at once from the empyrean in which her star-like image dwelt, to that slough of self-contempt which had impeded the first aspirations of his youth, and made them desperate struggles; in fact, the reaction of his audacity was as profound a humiliation for the moment, as perhaps he deserved.

After her cold greeting, it was scarcely an instant before the princess, followed by her ladies, turned to go, and Rodomant, thrilling through and through with the sharp-stung vanity he took for pride, fancied she had vanished so abruptly from pity for, if not disdain of, his wild ignorance. His eyes were fastened on the ground,

and his frown was at the darkest of its wrinkling shadow—half-petrified with the consciousness of what he *might* have lost, he could not stir. Fortunately for him, the prince was tired of this dumb audience, and how anxious soever to test the powers of charming found so efficacious by Saul, had other amusements to busy his august brain then.

So he said half-yawning, still gravely, as all princes and all men address in Belvidere, "You are fatigued, will like to retire; we shall meet again, if not to-night, to-morrow," then waving his glove, he also turned to go, through an arch behind the throne, whose draperies two pages held back on each hand for the train to pass—the princess and her train having passed through another door—and Rodomant just caught a dazzle of countless lamps in a lighted space beyond, before the draperies fell dark again. The hall was yet filled with servants in ranks unbroken, saving only two, who left the line, and bowing low to Rodomant, pointed gravely to another door and moved towards it in preceding him. They led the way through what to Rodomant seemed miles of gallery and corridor, bewildering for stately splendour to a gaze fed lately on Parisinian

taste, with its everlasting mirrors and inevitable gilding. Here all decorations were ages old, unworn as the architecture, and like that, had never felt the touch of damp—that most unconquerable of conservatism's foes. Pictures, each worth a royal ransom,—statues, each equal to the value of the fairest slave,—painted ceilings that seemed dropping grapes to make one thirst, lilies one longed to gather, roses one yearned to smell,—bronze palm-trees sprung from a mosaic floor, with cressets flaming from each branch for lamps,—walls hidden deep in damasks, old when the tapestry of the North was wrought, and fresh now *that* tapestry was threadbare,—great sheen of glistering shields, star-shapes of unsheathed swords, and rows of rapiers with gem-encrusted hilts that shone like the jewel-case of a barbaric queen;—all spoils of the age when fighting was an art, but unused in battle for centuries that ran close to the end of a millennium now. Something of the old passion, which when royalty bought loyalty by love, was young, seemed to haunt this palace-stillness, and hang like a perfume in its paths; so long will heroic memories of one hero only, last,—how much longer if of a race of heroes buried and turned to dust, or embalmed in marble, not per-

mitted, for all their state, *that* gentlest boon of death — to change. And Rodomant, excited to vivid enthusiasm, burning with romance, would have liked to linger there all night and people the solitude with musical images fairer than any that had ever lived there; but he could not pause, for his conductors passed on quickly—as it was, they were far in advance of him when they threw open a door at last, held it so till he came up to them, then bowed as he went in instinctively, and closed it after him. It was a door of a chamber with doors beyond—and yet beyond, —a palace in the palace, so it seemed to Rodomant. He knew not that the suite of rooms was that always occupied by the domestic musician of the prince, any more than he knew how and where his predecessor was cursing him for having supplanted him—in poverty and neglect all the more deeply felt because he had been thrust back into both after sudden if undue exaltation, just such as had now befallen Rodomant. In all respects these chambers were the same—save one. There was a little ante-room unfurnished, mosaic-floored, and damask-hung, and roofed with what seemed layers of concave shells dropping tears of coral that never fell; there was a small saloon with pictures,

soft carpets, and softer seats; a study, with books and instruments; a sleeping-room whose bed was hung with golden net—to keep out the stinging insects that haunted even *that* eternal summer—a little divan in which was a bath; a miniature oratory, and beyond all, a pearl of conservatories, shaped as a crystal lotus, but with inverted lips; this the new feature of which we spoke. Strange freak too—a conservatory in a climate where every flower conserved for colder climates by a coke-engendered summer stived in glass, blossoms to the moon in open beds. But this was a conservatory of coolness, not of heat, the temperature lowered to that of Rodomant's own native air. This he knew not, he only realised, stepping into a dim green twilight of leaves lit by one soft lamp alone, that there flourished old flowers which as a child he had gathered in the woods and fields, and carried home to the old German town to die; forget-me-nots, anemones, blood-red, veined lilac, and frosted white; pale pink wild roses, and countless blooms whose names he had forgotten, for they had been of his own creation when a child. In the midst, beneath the lamp, a tiny fountain sprang from a basin that looked hollowed from

a crystal, and was sunk in vivid moss, with fern leaves waving round it, just stirred on their delicate stems by the delicate vibration of the tinkling water-drops—like kisses broken into song. Beside the fountain, crowning charm of that cool fairy-spell, there stood, there grew—a little living linden, in whose frail green leafage and golden blossom was a nest of nightingales, singing to that cool summer or eternal spring. Rodomant stepped spell-bound, breathless, to the fountain's edge, and saw the sparkle of the water fretted by darker dimples, as the leaf-shades lay upon the ripple and were pierced by the lamp-lights between them. The linden, full in blossom as in leaf, seemed to ring out all its golden flowers like fairy-bells to greet him. The bloom-bells hung and rung so, the nightingales nestled and sang so, in the linden over his old father's grave in the old German city. Great proof, if simple, that love's essence is immortal, however transmutable, that there is never a time when the heart is sad or glad with tender reminiscence, that the thought of one's parents—bad or good; of one's brother—Cain or Abel; of one's sister—deep-hearted or frivolous; does not melt that soft mood into tears. The excess of Rodomant's

emotion welled up, like a spring overbrimmed with sudden rains, as calm at its surface as at its source; and in that sweet human frame he thought, not only of his old father, innocent as a grey-haired child, but of his living mother, who had often provoked him to laughter, but never to tears before. Yet that flow of sudden feeling perhaps made him in part ungrateful—he never considered it possible, though it was obviously more than probable, that this refreshing pleasure had been prepared on purpose for him; he only enjoyed the present happiness as we are too apt to do, without referring it to human care or sympathy. He waited, how long he knew not, till recalled. A silver-toned bell rang loud—he obeyed the direction towards the ante-room of the sound; there, at the open door, stood a beautiful pale boy, with the darkest eyes, dark velvet dress with a small silver cross on the breast, a little sword by his side, and a plumed cap in his hand. He held to Rodomant a small sealed note —opened, it showed, written in German, these words:—

"If you are not too tired, may I have the pleasure of seeing you for a short time this evening in the garden, my page will show you

the way. If you are weary say so, or you will grieve me much. My page speaks none but his own language.

"ADELAIDA, Princess."

Rodomant shuddered, then stood rigid; deeper, stranger than ever, wrought the spell, it was enough to arrest the flow of common life in human veins. A sort of rapturous recklessness succeeded the surprise, he felt desperate as in a delicious, but too hastening dream, in which we fear so to wake before the dream's perfection. He gave the page a slight thrust with his hand —the child ran on—but this time, to his comfort and relief, not through the almost endless spaces he before traversed, it was a shorter and a less illuminated way, where darkling shapes of sentinels seemed stationed everywhere, as they were outside everywhere, walking silent up and down. Passing out through an immense door, Rodomant found himself behind the palace, whose back, like its front, was one coruscation of illuminated windows; such illuminations, however, as were lighted every night. Intense curiosity, and the daring one feels in dreams, drove Rodomant round in front—the page following this time instead of leading—for sounds of music seemed

borne from that direction in unknown quaint strains. Arrived at the angle of the immense building, he saw the vast lawn, like a white and waveless sea, and groups upon it whose shades fell dark, but whose dresses looked like robes of spirits, all white or black. The women, whose singular sombreness of costume had struck him in the hall, all *wore white* now—still half-veiled from the head to the knee, but not the face, were veiled in white, their fans were white, and all those jewelled wore only diamonds, while very many wore, instead of jewels, the large bright fireflies of the country, caught and caged in silver net, and fastened in their hair and bosoms. The men, dressed all in black, gave their dark contrasting harmony to the spiritual white, such as is so rarely seen in costume, because colours thwart and scatter, rather than combine with black and white. They were dancing—all—and Rodomant in that short survey found that the dance-art was less a pastime than a deep and intricate delight; scarcely a smile broke the sweet yet grave monotony of motion, and for conversation, the air was winged with delicious whispers only. Rodomant, after one of his sweeping, piercing glances, saw that in that com-

pany, was no princess—among a thousand faces he would have known hers, and now as her idea came back, like a star which a cloud has passed over, he felt a profound awe, almost a tender terror, of her possible return—and that entirely because he had learned her name. And this magnetism of a name was simply one of those coincidences which chance every day presents, such as when we talk of a long-absent friend at morning, and he pays us a visit at noon, or we dream of a letter at night, and receive it by the post on the morrow. Still it is possible, that as the late discovered laws of science which may be termed ideal, are so simple, that their simplicity caused them to be overlooked for ages by the pedant and the philosopher, and to be grasped by the humble and the perseverant after all; so the laws of spiritual connection may be too pure to be greatly complicated. Enough—Rodomant felt as though his song-poem, Adelaída, had been prophetic sacrilege, and were punishable with the ignominy of detection and disdain by her—its prophetic heroine, one whose foot should, rightly, be upon his neck. And while so musing, deep again in self-disgrace, a shadow dropped on the clear pathway at his feet.

"You are here—that is kind," said the princess, "I saw you come out, I was in the gardens behind you, so I followed you—I, and you too, must be unseen to-night."

At the sound of her voice, so changed from its cold key; so cordial, gentle now, Rodomant raised his eyes from her shadow, and fixed them on her face. The first glance told that she had not changed her dress, still wearing the sombre robe that softened her dazzling beauty, the dark veil half-dropped from her golden hair, and her heavenly countenance turned shadeless to the moon. With modesty far higher than any pride, she showed no recognition of Rodomant's ecstatic and insatiate gaze, her cheek glowed not, her features quivered not, and when she led the way, with her slow and soundless steps, she turned towards him still. It was a face that made a crisis in the history of human beauty, so human was it where the most divine, its majestic outline disguised by the pathos of its expression, its princeliness lost in a loftier nobility. The forehead so vast and clear, with the temples an alabaster tint, the soft sharpness of whose edges told of fretted thought and wisdom drawn from sadness—the hair that seemed to fling out radi-

ance from the delicate head—the still transparent eyes, grey as the first creeping beam of morning, but by this moonlight dark as violets—the lips whose passionate yet unsmiling sweetness caused the impression of genius, stamped upon the aspect, to sink into that of love; all these, Rodomant now felt, that having seen *represented*, he had never seen before, and he also detected a mystery besides, blended with her demeanour so kindly, as with her clear regard—a mystery whose cause was indetectible, or which he dared not in his imagination try to solve.

"Oh," he gasped at last, "you are not like your pictures, yet I thought no one could live and be so beautiful."

She smiled, a smile which revealed with all its sweetness a vivid wit, albeit too tempered and too subtle for the sarcasm that can vent itself in words. Rodomant marked that voiceless irony, and it pierced him, as the wit of the beautiful alone can pierce the heart of man; he revenged himself by being actually rude:—

"Oh, princess," he exclaimed, "are you then vain, as other women?—it is no harm in them; they are consistent so; but you—how can you bear your portraits to hang everywhere, for

brutal men and vain women to make remarks upon?"

"What remarks did they make?" asked the princess, quietly, withal an interested accent that astonished Rodomant, quite as much as the calm gathered from her blood which prevented her easiest manner, her most earnest tone, from seeming or sounding the least familiar—nay, the least intimate—to the most audacious, such as *he*. "You do not tell me," she urged again. Now Rodomant had never *heard* a single remark; he had but made observations of his own, and well knew what they were. To escape confession, he went on abruptly:—

"But why, princess, do you have so many pictures painted? there cannot be enough artists who are *worthy*."

"You wish to know?—you shall," she said. "It is that men may know, and women too, if there is faith to be placed in looks, that mine at least are *human*."

Bitter was the stress she laid on the last word: Rodomant felt that it, too, partook of the mystery that ruled her aspect.

"I thought you were,—that your picture was of a saint," said he, "not a saint who had ever lived, though.

"I am no saint," replied the princess, sighing, "nor am I sure I wish to be one; there are too many martyrs upon earth not to render saintship upon earth a mockery, and a mimic heaven is nothing for hereafter."

"But there are saints," said Rodomant.

"Not on earth;" but she added, "I am glad you thought me one."

Had she known the core of the character with which she dealt, she would last of all have uttered this. Rodomant's chest rose, his pulses dangerously quickened.

"Do you know," she went on, "I ought to have told you where we are going, and have requested your permission, in case you felt unequal to any exertion—if so, speak. I am, I believe, unreasonable, for I want you to play to me to-night. I thirst—and I know (from one who knows) that the fountains lie under your hand. And perhaps for some days hence you will not be disengaged; you will have too much to do to indulge me so."

Rodomant, transported, could have kissed her garment's hem. "Anything, at all times, princess, and above all, now."

"See," said the princess, "we have already

walked some little way, for I would not summon attendants, and my page, who is behind us, will do all we want! I am taking you by a private path to the chapel, it is my way when I go there, and I beg you always to use it when you wish to play alone."

"The chapel, we are to go to a chapel then?"

"There is no room elsewhere for the organ, which, I believe, is the largest in the world; but no player ever put its whole power forth, scarcely, it seems to me, *could* mortal hands. There is a story of an old musician who did so, and who, in so doing, smashed the altar window."

"Stuff," exclaimed Rodomant, under his voice.

"I fancy so too," she said; "still there is a law that it must not be done, and it never is done. If ever such a calamity happened, it must have been some centuries ago, and the window must have been restored by human hands, for there it is, and I believe is the finest in Europe; it is certainly the largest, like the organ." As the princess spoke, she turned out of the full moonlight into a winding and narrow way. It was bordered with sensitive plants, and above them light-leaved aspens, shivering to the breezeless air as though departed spirits, unquiet yet, had rushed to take shelter

in their shade; and its turf was entirely composed of those short, subtle-scented herbs which aromatise the intense purity of the atmosphere in the Arabian desert. And in and out of the leaves, like shapes the restless souls had passed into, was scattered the quivering, dim gold-emerald lustre of countless fireflies. This path, with its strange, spiritual secresy, was in marvellous contrast with the scene beyond it; at once the wildest and the loveliest of the palace outskirts, and the highest ground. Here gushed and overpowered the milder flower fragrance, the intense perfume of fruit; vines laden with great grapes like those of Eshcol crawled on the ground, amidst the pines and melons, all basking in the mellow moonlight; pomegranates, figs and peaches, were fallen in wasted showers round dwarf groves of geranium and jasmine thickets, while everywhere, entwined with everything, and cheek to cheek in countless myriads were roses, roses whose bloom the moonlight could only veil, not quench, and whose leaves strewed the turf so thick that it was as though a storm of rosy snow flakes had dropped on that eternal summer. Rodomant, after the first glimpse of all this loveliness lit by the moon's soft blaze to beauty

seeming supernatural—yet nature's only, stood still, for an instant forgot the princess, who stood still too, and watched him with a distant yet gentle interest. He stood still, for he could not move—he was chained with adoration—his heart swelled in a single sigh that could not spend itself, at the scene both near and distant, over which the heaven seemed to bend in one vast smile. Along the line of the horizon, where the heaven kissed the earth, undulated high, fair hills, whose summits of dazzling yet silvery brightness outshone the lustre of the moon. Those hills, whose sides were dressed in an eternal summer, had for their crowns the eternal purity of snow. And nearer, in the moon's undaunted glory, were vineyards and groves of olive, sweeps of corn, with intervening glens where foliage blackly glittered, through which white villas gleamed. There was over the whole landscape a sleepy stillness, but it was defined as by day.

"It is beautiful, exquisitely beautiful," exclaimed Rodomant, suddenly, and using his favourite phrase when charmed; as suddenly he was reminded of the princess, and turned upon her all the rapture of his regard. "I am very sure," he added, sighing, "that it must be the promised land."

"No, no," exclaimed the princess quickly, brokenly, as though some strong emotion checked her even as she spoke, or as if in her enthusiasm she felt the want of her own tongue, for she still used Rodomant's. "It is not even on its borders," she continued in that startled, troubled voice. "Beautiful as is my country, all countries are nearer *that*. The eternal ices, the stunted forests of the north are nearer, the red hot deserts without a fountain or a tree, the damp-sodden cities that rise out of the islands of fog."

Again the mystery confronted Rodomant as a visage veiled; this time he gazed astonished at the princess, whose accent dropped from its agitation at sight of his surprise to a soft reserve, still touched with sadness, as she changed her theme.

"I fear it is getting late—I fear that I am selfish. See, the chapel is just at hand, through the little cedar grove." And walking on, she turned her face aside, though the velvet-like density of the cedar shadow was uncleft by a single moon ray, and the path they trod was as greyly dim as the twilight of a moonless night. As they left the grove, she said, quite calmly now, "There are no lamps lit in the chapel to-night,

but I know you can play in the dark—such mitigated darkness too as it will be with that moon of ours, and the gleam from the altar, too."

"Ah, the altar and the candles," said Rodomant, whom the cedar-dusk had restored as well to his composure. "You are a Catholic, princess, of course?"

"Perhaps so—in one sense I believe I am; in one sense they say not. I never confess."

"Because you never *sin*," he almost whispered.

"What say you?" cried the princess, her voice sharp-toned with mingled shame and reverence, no longer broken, but passionately distinct.

"Never let me hear—nor say you such words again, nor think them!"

The form of the chapel rose full and vast on Rodomant's vision now—where its dark edge crossed the brightness round their feet, she paused again, and lifting her eyes to the rich blue heavens, she murmured—

"See, *they* are not pure in His sight."

CHAPTER VI.

ENTERING the chapel, Rodomant marvelled at its name; it was such only in design and form, but in size a cathedral, the largest he had seen. The rare proportion of the wide, light-fretted arches, hanging in the golden darkness like a spell-work, to dissolve with the coming of the day,—the roof unpillared, vaulting out of sight, the sea of shadow that bathed the long vista at its base, the far yet vivid gleam of the altar candles, each looking like a spotless column crowned with flame, and that white Vision reared above all, watching through the stillness over all;—these things fell on the brain of Rodomant, and clung there like some reality intangible and awful as a dream. "You worship here, princess?" he asked, as after

granting him the time for one long look below, she hovered before him up a spiral staircase with balustrade of marble.

"Sometimes, when I am in the mood, but that is seldom."

"How so, in such a place, with such images around you, to stir thoughts of the Holy One?"

"My holy One dwells not in temples made with hands."

"Where, then, is His temple—all Nature I suppose?"

"But few find Him there!"

"Where, then, do you find Him, oh princess, for he must be ever near you?"

"In your heart I believe, in mine I hope."

"Now princess," said Rodomant, turning upon her as she touched the last stair, and rested to regain her breath, "that does not satisfy my reason, that arrangement of yours. In a book all Catholics hold good, and all good Christians read, there are some such words as these—I dwell in the humble and contrite heart—God speaks there too. Now you are not contrite, for you never confess you say, and I am not humble, because—because I am proud, and one can't of course be both."

"Humble before human clay — never, that were to sink as low. But humble before God—are you not so?"

"I do not know," said Rodomant. "I have never"—here his voice shook slightly, and he felt his lips turn cold—"never realised God in my life—princess, I believe I am a heathen."

"Do not use a word so meaningless—or which means the ignorant; you are not such. But it may be you are not to blame for this single-minded pride of yours, you have not been forced to the contrition for the sins of others who regret not, but glory in them—in which humiliation consists."

Rodomant was confounded, not as with an argument; but he could not dash the lucid truth aside; there was nothing to be said, except exactly what he thought. "Princess, you are very religious."

"I believe not—no, that is the last thing I am!"

They had reached the great space of the organ, whose height Rodomant could not guess in that vaster height, the roof; but its immense width and depth, its pipes like thickly-clustered columns of some basaltic cavern, and its rows above rows of sharply-glimmering keys, from which the page

deftly swept the covers, made Rodomant's blood dance, and his fingers tingle. Another moment and the giant-music slumbering was awakened in its gentle strength. But strange to say, just as he was about to seat himself, he looked at the princess, her pure pale face, her heavenly eyes, drew him back from that elder spell, his craft refused its cunning.

"Oh," he exclaimed, and his audacity was softened to supplication by his tone, "Oh, princess, I will play any time—if I only may talk to you now—if you behead me afterwards."

He moved as he spoke, not close to her side, but distant many feet, within the gilded fretwork that surrounded the place for the organist instead of curtains. She gave no sign, save that she forbade him not, and smiled a moment as he urged again. "Princess, what do you mean by saying you are not religious?"

"Because the first element of religion, in which there are two elements—and two only, it seems to me—is love to God, as the second is charity, or love to man. Now, who loves God? do you?"

She looked at him as she spoke, her voice was even severe, and her glance scrutinised. Rodomant felt his brain spin, as with the revolution

of a dazzling wheel, which plunged his thoughts into bright confusion, then stood still, and they rose strong and steady.

"I believe," he said at length, in the wary tone which attested his singular sincerity, "I do believe that I worship the Supreme, and that is all."

"Ah!" returned the princess, her words again divided by low deep sighs, "that is just the worst; I, too, worship the Supreme, it is so easy, for to worship is to a pure heart as necessary as breath to life—and He is everywhere, His beauty is eternal upon the earth; faith in His being is easy enough, but love for Him, how is that? But," she added, turning to him a sterner gaze, and the severity strengthening in her accent, "you have no such excuse as *I*, for you have not seen what I have seen, you know not the secret with which I groan. You have lived with Art, and for it; the greatest gift of God, except that love which I cannot feel, is yours. You have genius, nor have you, hitherto, misused it or misled your life. You *should* be grateful, you should love with such a love as I would die a thousand times, each time with a thousand tortures, but to *feel*!"

Mystery within mystery, thought Rodomant, nor pleasurable ones, it seems—what realization, not dim but vivid, of what naked terror, had tinctured this august pure nature with a despair as unnatural as her self-condemnation? The hour and the circumstances conspired to make the fact of her dread suffering too precious in his sight. She a princess, and he her servant, nay, her slave at pleasure! The loftiness of the theme which, as it seemed instinctively, the royal maid had chosen, and her unworldly anguish which, dwelling on it, drove all earthly considerations from them both—as twain souls, strangers in the flesh, should stand on a wrecking vessel side by side, whom each wave might unite in death, united therefore for the brief breath left them. Therefore, in simple and tender sympathy, Rodomant sought to soothe her thoughts.

"But," said he, "I cannot tell why it should afflict you, that you are not actually a saint—you do not wish to be one—you said so."

"Not for myself! nor is example anything, alas! But it seems to me strange that yours is not a softer nature, a nature tender enough for the flowers of heaven to inhabit it. I often

think, that had I lived where humanity is human, where men are ruled by a man and not a demi-demon crowned with folly—had I dwelt where the life of every day is made sweet by simple virtue—not heroism, but goodness and its joy; I should not, either, have been ungrateful—I should have loved Him as my soul, nor have ever loved *another* so that He could be jealous of my heart."

For the last few words only, in which she spoke of human love as a possibility, a strange tenderness had stolen on her speech, and as she uttered them, she looked out into the chapel; but her eyes seemed resting on nothing there. Rodomant leaning forwards to catch a glimpse of their expression—certain at that instant that he was not noticed—saw a mist upon them that almost drew dimness to his own; the source of tears was brimmed, but she would not let it overflow one drop—nor he. Certainly the terror had melted from those late dilated orbs; and if it was still passion that clouded their deep lustre, the trouble was one of joy. Rodomant had looked to see—had seen—but the strong instinct of his sturdy pride was true to it; he felt that as she had eluded the subject of their conversa-

tion, as she had momentarily forgotten *him*, so was his place by her no more for that time. His curiosity, his reverence, his sympathy, his worship—all sank together in the depths of that unfathomed pride; and without a whisper or a rustle, he was gliding—literally, for the musical are ever delicately footed as deftly fingered—behind her down the stair, when he saw through the last fret of the gilded cage about the organ, a sudden glancing light, that crossed the steadfast altar-candles far beneath their flaming tongues, and that glimmered, then was quenched in the abyss of shade from which the arches seemed to spring. Far be it from us to say that this light so little, and so swiftly darkened, would have deterred Rodomant from his retreat; on the contrary, he was hastening downwards, when the voice of the princess—all the more divinely sweet when she was unseen, as perfumes rise from flowers more delicious in the darkness—stayed him, as it must have done had he been told that to pause an instant was instant death.

"I fear I have kept you to-night too long, yet wait a moment longer, I have one friend here to whom I wish to present you, and I see he has just come in; he is crossing the chapel to go to

his own rooms, which are outside, near at hand."

"The man who held the lantern is a priest, princess, I see," said Rodomant, glancing through the fretwork, and distinguishing so much by the altar-light.

"My priest."

"To whom you never confess."

"He knows the reason." Then she called upon a name, adding a few words besides in her own tongue, new to Rodomant, so rich, so sonorous and majestic, that to his swift conception it seemed a language fit for royal lips alone. The figure of the man, which had reached the gloom beneath the arches, stayed there; and soon steps sounded on the pavement, and mounted the marble stair.

"I wonder," observed Rodomant, half to himself, "what he wanted a lantern for; it is so light abroad, and in here, too."

The princess heard him. "You need not enquire, it is not your work," she said; "and you may thank God for that, even if you do not love him."

Rodomant had no time to speculate on this remark just then, for the princess's priest, her

friend, as she had called him, stood before them. With his body he made the deepest reverence, but never raised his head, which, as he approached, was dropped low on his bosom, while his countenance expressed humiliation the most passionless and profound, a willing self-abasement which would have touched Rodomant's contempt, had it appeared on a face one shade less noble or admirable for that expression. As it was, the attitude and aspect shamed Rodomant for his own audacity and freedom; and again shame passed into surprise, as he glanced sideways at the princess. She had returned to her reserve as when in her father's presence she had greeted Rodomant so coldly, only she was colder now; and if there ever were a moment when she could be named haughty, it was that in which she introduced them—Rodomant to the priest, by name Father Rosuelo. Rosuelo bowed to Rodomant with the least possible inclination that the eye could detect, still never raised his eyes. Then the princess spoke again in her own tongue, and rather more at length, with rather more than ever of authoritative distance; but at the end of her august address she smiled for Rodomant.

"Good night," she said; "I have asked Father

Rosuelo to go to your rooms with you to-night for a little time, or, if you like it, to remain, as you may be lonely in a place so new; he is a delightful companion, I can assure you that." But she held forth no hand this time, and Rodomant, recalling his profane familiarity, felt the pulses prick in his lips for shame; never, never then should he breathe over that virgin lily of her hand again; and yet, before they parted, another short scene was acted through, as strange as any in his sight. An instant, and every trace of haughtiness had left the face of the Princess, and lowly she bowed her head, while the priest that instant reared himself his utmost height, and raised his eyes so suddenly, that it seemed as if he would avoid sullying by a single glance the edge of her white forehead; then he held his hands above her golden hair, and dropped from his lips a blessing, as sweet and rich as scattered incense, whose great old Latin words Rodomant could interpret from the masses of Italy and mediæval Germany. And as the deep Amen melted from his solemn utterance, the Princess lifted her head, once more *not* humble in the presence of a man. Without looking towards either of her companions again, she called her page

from behind the organ, and passed down stairs, while, through the fretwork, Rodomant beheld that she left the chapel by the door at which the priest—not she before with himself—had entered it. This would have driven his wonder to his lips directly, but for the change in Rosuelo, which he marked, as his eyes left the vacancy her going had made else everywhere. No longer humble, with bowed head—no longer either rapt to heaven with vision strained from earth, but erect, with a dignity which would have been superb in a courtier the nearest to the sceptred hand; and with an expression of face as little angelical as Rodomant's, perfect as was its beauty. It is very likely that his first full sight of Rodomant convinced him that the least assumption of celestial authority over *that* mortal, would only affect comically his unvenerative nature; at all events, when he spoke, the tones were as little as possible pious, though polite with the same perfection as his facial beauty.

"You will not consider, I hope, that her highness's recommendation of me renders it *necessary* you should accept my poor companionship; how proud too, even, I should be to offer it—how far prouder of your own."

"I am thankful on the contrary, since it pleases you. I fancy, however, you will hardly stomach the task, for a task it will be—a long one I should think. I am literally perishing of curiosity, and if I do not this night obtain some satisfactory clue to this maze of inconsistencies that have put my thoughts into a tangle too, I shall commit suicide on the spot—not this holy one.—For I suppose death gives us all the knowledge denied by life;—it ought, in consideration of what it takes away." Not a shade of disapproval crossed the other's countenance. "But you all speak German here—it is strange, difficult as it is."

"I believe the princess and I are the only two, if I dare mention her highness with myself. The prince knows but a phrase or two. Still, you should learn our language, finer than Italian for music, as it is more poetical for prose—I should be very glad to teach you at my leisure."

"Thanks, I shall teach myself, I always do. But if I am to hear anything before the morning, it seems to me we should stir. And really, Sir, though those grand apartments are called mine, I feel too little at home in them to take *you* there—it is you who must conduct me."

"You are so courteous," said the priest, "that I

fear not to vex you by the confession, that if I am to reply to any questions of yours regarding this place, or what you aptly term the inconsistencies around us, it must not be in your own rooms. Were I seen to enter with you, and known to remain longer than necessary for the purposes of my calling, it might be reported to the prince our master, and if he should become aware, some suspicion might rest with you of being initiated into that knowledge, which to attain and digest here is to eat a bitterer fruit than that which changed to despair the innocence of our earliest parents; not to speak of the possibility of your being dismissed before you have taken your stand almost, —a high stand that will be, if we may believe one who never errs in precept or in statement, whatever his practical future remains to be."

"Ah!" said Rodomant, "a spark seems to glimmer in my bewildered brain; how good! if in this glow-worm suspicion of mine my first mystery should be cleared from its entanglement. Do you mean a man in Parisinia called Porphyro?"

A little start betrayed some slight temporal excitement in the man of the church, though it was further betrayed—to the empty moonlit

chapel only—by the volcanic flash that leapt from his bright eyes, aside.

"What other name than Porphyro should he bear? Man-miracle, who, if he lives but to fulfil his own promises, is the prophet of the age, the only one whose predictions shall not lie. Yes, I mean Porphyro, and he is one of the *consistent* mysteries, so far as he has yet proceeded, because remaining, as a mystery should, to preserve its mysticism, unrevealed." Then changing his tone, he said, "Warm as it is, we must not stay all night, for were we found here none would give us credit for confessions at such a length. I was going to ask you to come to *my* rooms, very inferior to yours in all respects; but it strikes me you are likely to be temperate and careless of luxury as you are independent; we shall at least be safe there from paid eyes of sentinels."

"I will go anywhere, to ask you what I want to hear, and get your answers."

"Come, then, follow me," answered Rosuelo, "I do not wonder; were I in your place, I should feel the same, and in mine the knowledge of what is, while it ceases to be matter of curiosity, remains a mystery still."

The two men went down stairs towards the

door through which the princess had passed, Rosuelo taking his dark lantern from a stall where he had placed it. Rodomant, intent on getting out as soon as possible, looked neither to the one hand nor the other, but in spite of himself, he was attracted to the end, so much and so directly that he passed the door where Rosuelo stayed, and went straight on. No marvel; it was not the stupendous window that would have filled the space of the widest arch, nor the priceless pictures on which genius had exhausted art to imagine the unseen, but the amazing spectacle seen only at such a shrine, prodigy of human ignorance that by the material would propitiate the divine. Rodomant, beneath the altar, stood statue-still, and gazed, and gazed unwinkingly, at the cold, yet fiery splendour. As if the hand of some giant had unlocked in that creative soil the secret mines of gathered ages, or all the kings of the whole earth had come, as those of the East alone in the old times before us sought the straw-spread cradle of humanity's best friend, to pour their treasuries out empty at the feet of one they knew not, yet adored. Great crosses each gem a diamond glory; topaz and amethyst in clusters like the grapes without the walls;

sapphires large as the evening planet strikes on northern eyes, heaps of rainbow-veiling opal, pearls—as though the sea had cast up all its pearls,—rubies and carbuncles, like roses blossomed out of flame; chains thick as golden mánacles, and gyves of silver; filagree, to which gold wasted had given a worth beyond gold; lace carved from ivory, rings each an amulet; and again, ingots upon ingots of the royal and virgin metals; and *last*, above all this abased and useless wealth, rose the stainless effigy of human passion, made divine through purity—the idea to outshadow which in type has taxed human invention to the verge of madness, and tested human worship at the expense of man's love to God, exhibited in love towards his kind. Rodomant took no long survey, he turned quickly from the shrine on which that storm of riches had fallen, resting quietly, his eyes smarting with the tears the blinding blaze had drawn to them. "Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, in his simplest manner, "how rich the prince must be!"

"The prince?" said Rosuelo, gravely—"the Church. And this but a niche of the church as small, in comparison with its whole temporal wealth, as the least of the visible stars in comparison with the system of the universe."

"Ah!" observed Rodomant, quaintly, "it is a great thing to belong to a church so rich, as it is a credit to be one—even a poor relation—of a very wealthy family; I understand."

Rosuelo made no answer, but paced rapidly to the door, still open, but which he closed behind himself and Rodomant. "Now let us hasten," said he, and strode on fast again.

Again reminded by the brightness of the moon, Rodomant recurred to the lantern, now extinguished. "May I enquire why it was lighted in the first instance?" he said.

"Oh, certainly—I had been in the dungeons, darker places than, I hope, you ever saw. Now please me by putting no more questions till we are safe—till I speak to you myself."

Rodomant was quieted more easily, as he wanted leisure to inspect the road they took—a new one altogether, leading farther from the chapel and the palace (perhaps half a mile) into what seemed to him wild country, but which was still enclosed, until they reached what Rodomant had noticed in the distance as a mansion of sparkling marble, but which was a wall extraordinarily lofty, of pale grey granite, marbled as it were by the moonlight's blaze. No trees were

tall enough to overtop this wall, save here and there a palm, which drooped like funeral plumes—a dark and mournful crown.

"What place is behind, in there? a prison, I suppose, where the dungeons are?" again asked Rodomant.

But Rosuelo shook his head, next minute stopping at what looked like a buttress sprung from the wall's huge angle, but which proved to be a human habitation, how difficult soever to name, whether as vault above the ground, or as prophet's chamber in, not on the wall. Opening the door with a key fastened to his girdle by a cord, he entered, followed close by Rodomant, who, while the other struck a light, first knocked his head against the low lintel, and then stumbled over the step by which was the descent to the floor within. Once there, he stared all round — not a large circle — with fresh amazement. Arched exactly like a vault, the furniture thereof was just such as that of the prophet's chamber; and Rodomant had the fixed idea that priests worshipped images and gazed on pictures, till the quiver of their own strained eyeballs or twitch of lips too weary of repetition, was ascribed to the stone features or tints intan-

gible of the canvas. Also he had heard of scourges self applied, and exposed, not hidden; and cold crosses on which faith's victim stretched himself, long, night-long vigils. Nothing such here, for use or ornament, not a crucifix above the pallet, narrow as a grave; not a black-looking volume upon the reading eagle, of unplaned wood.

"Let us sit down and sup," said Rosuelo, as he placed a candle in a metal stand on the table, shapeless and uncarven, and drew the two rude stools which were the only seats, and the only number there was room for, forwards. Rodomant, easy as in his London attic, easier than in saloons he ever felt, sat down and watched the other with curiosity, which became pleasure—for whatever made men independent of each other and the world he steadfastly admired. The supper was barley-bread, served on wooden platters, abundance of grapes in a rough straw basket, and a handful of cold roasted eggs laid on fresh leaves —that was all, and all came out of a little vaulted hole in one corner,—could there be corner where a room was round?—which served for cupboard and for library. Last of all, before seating himself, Rosuelo filled a pitcher of reddish earth with water from a huge stone basin, which, as the

corner hole was library and cupboard, served for wine-cellar and toilet-mirror as well. As the candle-flame, more liberal in its revelations than moonlight, showed completely and fully Rosuelo's face, Rodomant again remarked its beauty, in which the searching vision could detect no flaw. Superb features, of strong patrician type; skin bloodless pale, unwrinkled as a rose-leaf freshly plucked; grave, deep-grey eyes, looking as black as they were lustrous from the darkness of the fringe; hair where it was left, like threads of sable silk—these traits had once stamped him the handsomest man in Belvidere, and it was his exhausting life which had given him *beauty* on chasing mere good looks away, as it was his intense inward and constant struggle with passion as strong as he, which imparted to him the melancholy calm that yet was least like the angelical.

"You eat nothing yourself," said Rodomant, pulling grape after grape from the stem.

"I have supped," answered Rosuelo, "on something sweeter than is in my power to offer you."

"You are a strange one for a priest—no crosses nor virgins, nor beads, nor pictures, nor rods; then you say you have eaten, that does not look like fasting."

"My instruments of torture are kept in a secret place, yet none the less inactive—what I worship is also there. As for fasting, my food this evening was not food of men, but angels—or sweeter; that which one eats not nor drinks, yet receives; which nourishes not the body, yet sustains the life to *suffer on*."

"That is, you are a Catholic of the princess's sort, she don't confess; it is all *spiritual* I suppose, as my mother says, though she is no Catholic either. You adhere to the principle and eschew the practice—only in private life, of course?"

"I am surprised at nothing you say; and being something of a physiognomist, the very alphabet of the science teaches me that you are sincere, and that it is not needful to explain to you that secrets are secrets—you understand them so. Otherwise, I had not brought you hither—I had literally obeyed the princess's commands."

"Good," said Rodomant, "you are safe, for I have no one to whom to repeat a secret; I knew a lady once I might have told, but she is as good as dead to me, for I have killed her out of my thoughts, and a cold grave she has of it in my memory. But, I must ask, do you prescribe this

spiritual fulfilment of the delegated orders of papa in Rome, for all your sons and daughters, that you follow yourself—and prescribe, I suppose, for the highest of your congregation, unless she adopts it of her own accord."

"I ordain obedience implicit, absolute, unquestioning, to every ordinance great or simple, public or secret; from every one except myself, with whom I am concerned, saving only in the case you mentioned last. Obedience to me, as if to the sovereign of the church; yet to whom, as to all here, I seem as though I too obeyed, more rigidly than all. Yet remember, none know me, none follow me hither, and you, the first I have admitted, will not take advantage of my confidence."

"Never, when it is made mine. But are you enforced—actually self-enforced to lead a life all lies—do you enjoy deceiving others? It cannot be for gain's sake, as I see you *here*."

"I deceive no one; what is prescribed is right—for those it suits, those whom it relieves, those whom it holds in check from the clutches of despair. Some constitutions, drugged too deeply, cease to respond to medicines; there have been those who fed on poisons, yet could not find death

through them. So I, I have survived forms—rites touch me like a dead man's finger. But in this land all who are not born villains, are kept in childhood all their lives — childhood as to ignorance, not in the innocence of joy. The former — those who will not believe, because they dare not, either in forms or the Deity which forms assume to reach, I make tremble; they can only be fascinated from crime by fear, fear of the wrath to come. But the rest, the children, swathed in bands of oppression, iron-fettered under pretence of helping them to run alone, blind-folded for fear the light should let them see too much: these, if they found or fancied Divinity in a pebble hammered from a rock, I would instruct to kiss the stone and keep it for a charm within their breasts. Men want consolation everywhere, so all my brethren tell me—of every church; that they languish without it in this age more than any other; how then must it be HERE, a corner of the earth which God made most beautiful, like old Jerusalem, only to forsake it."

"Hush—for old Jerusalem, you know little about that. Why *her* own words are these, old as her hills, and written on the hearts of all her

children. 'The tabernacle of God is now with every nation. Worship no more towards Jerusalem, for in the heart of every man is henceforth the Holy of Holies.' You will wonder how I—not being a Jew of course myself, remember such words. A lady told them to me—a lady whom I have forgotten, but I did not forget those words, they not being her own. And I was reminded of them by something the princess said, only to her I dared not repeat them."

"I know but one heart in which is the Holiest of Holies," said Rosuelo, "and that is hers. In our hearts here there is no Deity—neither the King of Heaven, nor the idea royal which, if pure, in some sort symbolises Him on earth, and *so* incites men to morality and greatness, as the King Divine invites to love and worship. Our hearts are all empty, but it is not so easy to rid men of busy brains; and out of busy brains with no hearts to govern and guide them—nothing but empty husks—what may not come?"

"I do not know, nor understand; but in most countries, whatever common people suffer, great people are exempt. Here the contrary is the case."

"Not at all—at the end, we wait for that."

"I never heard nor read anything particular

about this country. When I told people I was coming, all they said was, 'what a fine climate—how rich a princedom, the most ancient dynasty of Europe. For a man to go there gives him style—for an artist,' (being below a man, I know not in what degree) 'for an artist to get to Court, is to obtain credit with all the world, so that he may remain idle ever afterwards.' Nor have I ever found its place in history—but then I never read any in our library at Gottsend, except 'Josephus' and the 'Thirty Years' War.'"

"History of the past is only veiled truth, the veil is torn here and there, but generally dim enough to deceive the keenest student. And as for the histories of the day contained in newspapers, they dare not reveal what they cannot veil, so they leave it to proclaim itself."

"Why, dare not?"

"Because newspapers feed thousands—with bread, not news, though the bread for each may be as scant as the truth, and as much adulterated."

"In God's name, pester me no longer with explanations that tend to no given point. Tell me the truth you *know*, however little there is of it, which concerns this land, little tract as it looked on the map which hung in our Town-hall,

a narrow strip, and an island, with the sea between them."

"As for the truth, that is yet veiled, and though the veil must be rent, it may not be in our time. There is one man, who *may* know, may foresee—Porphyro—for I sometimes think he has been baptised with prophetic vision, and if so his brain is vast as well as clear enough to embrace the future of all castes and countries on the globe. However, he confides in no man, though I believe he has confided in one woman to a certain extent, as far as he deems her capable of comprehension. Still, this much is true, if it be true that thunder and lightning are born in the mixing of two clouds—we are doomed; and my prayers begin and end, nay, but contain the changeless yearning; 'Master of the earth, let it be *soon*, so dreadful is the time till then, so mighty in its misery.'"

"I suppose the princess is safe, whatever happens, nor does she look like one to fear for *herself*. Yet your voice and your words reminded me of hers when she upbraided me to-night for not loving, as she called it, as well as worshipping the Supreme.

"You have no such excuse as I," she said, "for you have not seen the things I have seen, you know not the secrets with which I groan.'"

"These were her very words, strange ones for a princess I thought, and her voice was more awful than they."

"Did she say so? Alas! for her sufferings, if that heart is driven to confess them to a stranger." Rosuelo's voice sank low, and trembled, his hand, clenched upon the table, trembled too; but he only gave way like a highly-tempered sword bent by the hand, returning in an instant to its form, direct and keen. "As for her, she suffers because she is—what all who know her know—because she is *herself*. That girl would die on a cross to save one blameless person from torture, or one soul from sin. I used to think in my idle days, and was wrongly taught, that only sin is sorrow; false that, for the being the most heavenly, yet most human on the bad earth now, would be crushed by sorrow, if it were not for the love which sustains her—a love which embraces the whole world, but chiefly those who in it are made her own by suffering."

"Oh, I will believe all that, and take for granted all the panegyrics which, either from natural gratitude or ecclesiastical etiquette, you may desire to pronounce; but you have given me no clue yet, or if you put it into my hand I

dropped it—very careless; but your fine words bewildered me, simple as I am, a layman, too—if an artist dares claim that distinction in common with men *not* artists. What is the matter with the people and the prince—for I suppose he is included—and why are there secrets? Above all, why should the princess meddle in them?"

"Is it possible that you never took notice of passing events in Parisinia? That you knew nothing of its mad-like progression in politics? That you heard nothing of the parties men have made themselves into, each against each, and all against the throne?"

"I never heard a word—at least, there was one thing I knew, that men were very often mistaken for other men, and dragged to prison without being first *condemned.* As for the throne, it is odd, with all against it, how calm and smiling are the king and queen; I saw them, they sent for me." Rodomant felt complacent, even at their ghosts, and the ghost of that fact, in memory.

"Ah!" went on Rosuelo, "I might have known your ignorance of the state of things, for Porphyro said of you, in his letter to the princess, that you were a 'rigid art-recluse, and the only

person he ever knew who rendered a mean pursuit sublime.'"

"He said that, did he? I wish I had known it."

"You would not have come, I suppose; your pride would have detained you there."

"Ah! but I am afraid I should, yet I know scarcely why I came; it was not to see the original of all those pictures, for I did not know they were of the princess; nor was it because of Adelaïda—I did not know it was her name; nor because I wanted money, for I find I can make that anywhere."

"I believe," said Rosuelo, calmly, "that you came just because Porphyro advised you to come. I never knew anyone resist the slightest suggestion of his; I was going to say except myself, but I have never had the opportunity. I am to him but as one of the tapers on the altar, or one bead of this rosary of mine—a small item of Church property contributing towards its furniture a mite."

"A very large, and a very magnificent mite," cried Rodomant, laughing; then plunging his hands into his hair, and entangling it hopelessly, "My thoughts are not only knotted and twisted,

but whirling round; yet, hitherto, all the things I wanted to know have turned out as little supernatural as Porphyro, and not one is, despite his common-place platitude, so great a mystery; ghosts, changelings, and the new men with tails just discovered in Africa, are open revelations, and real, compared with him. Therefore, in case I go mad before the end of my questions, pray tell me in a word, who is Porphyro. I tried to find that out. A man was just telling me when he was taken to prison out of the street. And as for Porphyro himself, you might as well try to bleed a block of marble."

"Everything else, save what is under seal of my conscience for others;—all else I will tell you gladly, but not that; Porphyro's pretensions *I* will not explain, it would not be just. If you are honoured with another private interview with the princess, ask her—she may condescend to tell you;—she alone knows, or asserts that her opinion is correct and lucid."

"Ah! you hate him! I hear it in your voice. Well, if I must wait I must, but it is a curious subject for *her* contemplation—so ugly a being, she might as well think of *me!*" with a sort of grim glee.

"But you spoke of parties all hating the throne in Parisinia. I cannot see the connection between them and Belvidere, or the secrets under which you and the princess groan, for they seem to affect *you* as deeply."

"The only connection between them lies in the universal European anarchy which is likely to result from a special outbreak in Parisinia—for in all cases of revolution in modern times, Iris has struck the key-note. Any civil panic annihilating monarchy there would communicate itself to all those Italian and German provinces whose wrongs are smouldering, like covered fire, which, for want of air, seems only harmless smoke. Once kindled, the great flame-contagion would roll on steadily, and take us in its course; for wrongs so mighty yet condensed into so small a space, would ignite more easily than all. Those are our secrets, yet known to thousands, and we dare not avow them for *their* sakes, we, the minority, who could do nothing for them by ourselves, save to heap up higher their earthly hells of torment—did *we* complain, who have no power to save. These are our secrets; and though your ear shall not detect in the stillness round us, when we hold our speech, one zephyr's flutter, one nightingale's low note in

all the air; though sound seems quenched with weariness in the moonlight whose white wings cover us; yet I tell you I hear, not *fancy*, but *hear* groans indistinguishable, which have sunk into my brain,—shrieks wrung clear from agony that have cloven my heart and entered,—sobs that crushed inwards by endurance of thousands, seemed crushed into my bosom too,—and above all, the surging of a sea made of million times a million tears—not drops, but waters, seems beating endlessly beneath my feet. I tell you, stranger as you are to miracles in wrong and woe, that all these sounds I *hear*, distinct as if trumpets were blown, or thunders rattled across the midnight. And, victims as we are, we who suffer and who love, we yet have this proof, that God afflicts through man;—for one higher than an angel, yet lowlier than all the upstart women of the earth besides, weeps for us, would die for us—but that she saves herself for us instead!"

Rosuelo stood up, as though he would pace his cell, then sank down again, for in twelve feet of room across its circle where was there room to turn? He wiped with an end of his serge frock, great pearls of sweat from his face, that from its whiteness had formed there indetectibly; the

only tears he ever deigned, or dared, for fear of losing his control, to shed. Rodomant surveyed him with a pity none the less deep because it was still thwarted by a curiosity roused almost to desperation by his words, thrilling and full of meaning, yet obscure as wandering Eolian harmonies, in which the Art-trained musician delighted not. But the pity overcame, and as the curiosity sank secondary, a self-convicted knowledge dawned—often the case, when men of high intelligence are cast upon that alone.

"You mean, I suppose," said he, after musing a minute, and creating and destroying in that minute as many theories of popular adversity as Malthusians would have invented in a millennium. "I suppose you just mean, that this Prince Belvidere is a tyrant, a person like those of ancient history, who became the foundations for the giants and ogres who ate little children—you called the most part of the people children, I remember. Poor sweet princess, I little thought thee rudely housed and hardly loved, my Adelaïda. No disloyalty *there*, for the princess of the *song* is mine; I always wondered at her loveliness—no wonder now, prophets only *hint* at truth in prophecy." Rosuelo stared at Rodomant,

who since he recalled the memory of his virgin song, the sweetest ever invented or sung by man, had dropped his voice, as though he addressed a fairy up his coat sleeve. The priest heard only the allusion to the prince, and afterwards a vague mutterance; expecting some result, he waited, but none came.

"A tyrant!" said Rosuelo, suddenly, steadying his voice as it were to pronounce the hated word more perfectly. "To call him tyrant, is to name a tiger a turtle-dove, or a wolf a lamb dropped white upon the grass. Tyrants are ever strong, but the best of them have been brave, the worst of them have dared to threaten by word of mouth; not bullied through mouthpieces for fear of the bow drawn at a venture piercing through the smallest loop-hole. The emperor-demon of old Rome broke flies upon his finger nails for pastime, but the prince of this Paradise on earth breaks men upon the wheel in earnest, out of his own sight, and the tales of their torments are his romances and his poems—not that he confines himself to one phase of torture, there is no monotony in his revenge on innocence—and surely Freedom must have the wings of an angel, not a bird, for he cannot crush it, though he *is* crushing it for

ever—it is like seed scattered by the wind on plumes of down, trampled into the ground it dies —to rise again, nor are the harvests few nor far between, only as yet, *they* are crushed as easily as the germ that gave them birth."

Rodomant, perceiving that even his companion's earnestness made him drift from the point, observed with his peculiar quaintness, "Why don't they kill him? such things have been and are justifiable. Jael killed Sisera, and was praised for it in the Bible; a Frenchwoman stabbed one of the bad leaders in the Revolution,"—but here he paused; unluckily for his allusions, they were both feminine, and recalled the princess—could he fancy her a murderess—of her father, who, whatever he was, had given her to the world? It was a depth he could not fathom, and cared not to look down. "Why do the *people* let him live?" at last he added, endeavouring mentally to lose sight of the ideal parricide that had crossed his thoughts.

"Have not swords leapt from many a scabbard, and balls whistled in scores along the wind, all directed at his breast? none touching the vital inch, which invaded, would rid the world?—is it that the Thing has no heart—is actually not

mortal, but devil-born? Sometimes in my wildest moments, I fear so. But seriously, the people brood eternally over the *means* of his destruction, and therein lurks their own. But see, it is just that fixed idea and hope of theirs which ruins the innocent with the guilty, those who only conform to, with those who project, the intention. Spies, planted everywhere, thick—yet unnoticeable as summer insects, carry each word, each gesture or grimace of disaffection, to those who guard the throne; the sun sets not before they who whispered, or looked, or shrugged, strew the bottoms of the dungeons. Not only so, however. Among men who aspire to domestic ties in life, it is a proverb that love's raptures are too sacred to be expressed—as a priest, to whom love is forbidden, my sacred theme is agony. . . . Why do they not kill him? How, except on few and rare occasions, a state-procession, a solemn airing, a farce of worshipping in public, can they *see* him, or be near enough even to breathe 'death,' in his farthest courtier's ear? And fewer and rarer those occasions, the longer he endures. His palace is a prison, his courtiers armed for *him* (are they not also armed to protect themselves,

their wealth, their lusts, their vices?)—white as pure innocence beside the palest of *his* crimes. His servants are soldiers, bound by bribe instead of honour; see how they creep, rank after rank, up to his house, they besiege, in order to protect it. Mailed all over but at the mouth, his guards keep his golden gates, and stretch thence in one long iron, yet pulsating chain, up to his chamber-door. His bed bristles with weapons; his pillow covers implements of destruction. For the sole remaining danger (poison) every cup he fills is half-emptied before he tastes it, and each plate he fills is shared."

"How can it be?" asked Rodomant, half to himself, "for even bad kings are not often cowards. How grows, or whence comes, a character so unnatural, so unsuited to such a dignity? *that* is stranger than that being born to his place, he should resolve to keep it."

"Not strange to those who read the clearest and most obvious, most inviting of nature's secrets, yet which, alas, none concerned in them, ever will read, or if they are forced to perceive, will confess. As intermarriages of weak and faulty families, repeated from generation to generation, to gain or to conserve wealth, power,

or to seal ambition; as such unions stamp accidental defect or wickedness as *special* by reproduction, so, in progress of time, they cease their speciality, and becoming hereditary, are the *fact*, a double evil—disease or madness; scrofula of the blood or of the brain, co-existent, with scarcely an exception; but scarcely co-active, that is, if the brain is actively affected, the health is seldom externally so; if the body is preyed upon, the brain is generally passive. The former is the case of the prince."

"Good heavens, what a web of words; but for the last, I should have had no hint, for your allusion to families and marriages plunged me into double mysticism. Never call German mystical again. But do I understand you to say the brain of the prince is affected, not his health; if he is insane, then, where are his crimes? how can he be responsible?"

"It is a doctrine as mischievous as absurd," said Rosuelo, coolly, "and all the more fallacious because it is popular, to excuse crimes committed by a madman, on the plea, that non-responsible, he is therefore innocent. None but a bad man, gone mad, ever conceives or commits crimes; it is the test of a man's character, what he does,

says, feels, when control is lifted from him—in sleep, delirium, drunkenness, dementia. Thousands of the good and innocent, lambs bearing the sins of their forefathers, are sacrifices to that form, the most terrible of heaven's retribution, wrought in man on earth; for ever in our thoughts should such be set aside, and between them and the bad in whom God suspends volition (the true cause of madness), let there be a line drawn, defined as between blackness and the noonday. Harmless they, sacred in their delusions, their fancies, their reveries; *holy*, as the sage among savages used to denote them, whether wild or calm; susceptible of elevation and improvement, or doomed to perpetual dwarf-hood of the faculties, by an atony of the mind's material."

"Heaven help me," said Rodomant, "but not being, nor inclined to become, a physician or pathologist, is that the term?—I rather prefer facts to explanations. If the prince is mad, and your dogma holds, that intermarriages perpetuate accidental fates, how came he so? Cannot kings find mates in the many royal dynasties besides their own?"

"Not where such wealth, such false yet fast tenures of state and superstition, such arrogance

and power, such giant strength and monstrous weakness, have held each other together so long; bound by blood, the strongest of all amalgams, which losing its virtue, changes affection into selfishness—decomposes it, like a body beneath the earth, just holding together for want of air, but which once exhumed, mixes in a moment with the common dust. Such is the doom of all dynasties which endure through selfishness and pride only—the air kept out, or *truth* kept from contact with them, they enjoy a living death, and blight all things, all persons within their spell, with breathless but not harmless terror. The rent once made, whether by the daring many, or the dauntless one; truth once forced inwards at the breach, and no need for bloodshed; the skeleton clothed in strength has crumbled, the spell is scattered to annihilation."

"It strikes me," said Rodomant, who was not struck so much as amused by this tirade—as, indeed, the inexperienced in physiology—key to history's cipher—ever are at the fragments of wild theories which are all its votaries have time to gather in a single lifetime. "It strikes me as strange after all these horrors, conglomerate and actual, that such a person as the princess

should exist—of royal blood. If what you assert be true, she must be false to nature."

"Not the least; her existence is a truth of nature's in itself, as pure and perfect as a flower, withal as simple. The princess's mother was not of royal blood—and that one fact in her father's career, his marriage, seems in its result to favour the celestial superstition that there are human beings appointed now and then to embody angels—spirits albeit chained to clay, that drop blessings where they move and breathe; that rob curses of their evil charm; that where they cannot save, console not with charity but love; whose sympathy lends sweetness to the cup of death, and shares its bitterness. Such is the princess;—but what besides? Scarcely should I tell you, if I could, for who dares to think, to dream of her, as of a woman?"

"Except that you have been dwelling on her womanly character only: the brow wearing the crown cannot stoop or the crown will fall. If her mother was not of royal blood, how came it to pass that her father married her?—why was he allowed?"

"He was not allowed nor disallowed. Already the dynasty is so near decay that those who,

supporting it, are supported by it, dare not rouse themselves, nor stir one finger to resist a whim of the head. The subtlest movement or division among them might hasten the crisis they abhor to contemplate. The marriage of the prince was a whim; yet if heaven could spare one hope for him, its result might seem such; at least, an atonement to the people — and in her person a gift, a sign from heaven. Those whom the prince tortures, condemns unheard, dooms to ignorance and fear alone for life, all call her their child, not his—the people's child; all stretch to her their hands, at her feet would cast their hearts; she might tread upon their necks."

Rodomant, in his wise simplicity, felt not so sure of this, even on his brief acquaintance with the princess and her future subjects.

"Stilts again," was his remark. "Pray go on with the story; bring it down to the level of my intelligence. His marriage was a whim—what then?"

"I should have told you that the princess is the child—the only one of his second marriage. His first, with a cousin of the nearest affinity, was fruitless of a son, and all the daughters died as infants. There can be little doubt he

frightened his wife, feeble in body and in mind, to death—for it is amazing how long luxury and ease will retain the faintest life in existence—there is nothing to fret the thread. And the first princess died young. Our princess's mother was, though not royal, of noble blood, mixed with that of a far race much fairer than this which peoples Belvidere, though of fraternity with that too, in the beginning—farther back than pedigrees are traced. Under the snow-crowns and lucid skies of Caucasus, the beauty was first-born from light and cradled, which gave to the mother of our royal angel, her sun-touched hair, and heaven-coloured eyes. She was almost as fair as her child, almost as holy, in all save the weakness, and that rather of head than heart, which allowed her to marry *him*. He married her to possess her, and possessing, cast her from him like a weed. A weed may flourish on a dunghill, but not a flower, whose seed first fell from heaven. So, flower-like, she dropped a seed and died. When first insulted by the prince, she fled to the only dwelling not closed to her by *him*, the only gates not guarded, opened wide to welcome her; she found an asylum where safety was purchased by purity, and assured by weakness; the nearest house kept sacred by the Church to women.

"Oh, a nunnery—is there one near? The prince is superstitious then?"

"What you call so—and what perhaps I think so, but may not say. The Convent of the Weeping Sisters lies within the wall of which *that* wall"—pointing with his finger—"is part. You asked me what it was this evening, at a moment when it was imprudent to speak, therefore I did not reply. Yes, in that house the mother died—in that house the princess was born, and there every night she sleeps. Passes in at the gate a royal maiden, lies down a sister on a bed scarcely softer than my own, and rising in the morning still a sister, she wears the robes of the order till after noon—then drops them, and is until the evening again, a king's daughter."

"That is all very romantic, and like a girl," observed Rodomant, "but it seems to me that there is a waste of time—and a sentimental air—in that. I should prefer the princess, that is, respect her more, if she were always, at all times, just herself—I recollect particularly, the picture of her as a sister—certainly the dress made her look most beautiful of all."

"Silence!" said Rosuelo, "how dare you tamper with her motives? you who are not

worthy to understand them. Yet listen—for the meanest shall not calumniate her, while I have breath. The princess wears that dress, assumed that order, that she might visit all who suffer in all their nooks of hell—she would enter hell itself to rob it of its prey. As a daughter of royal blood, so rigid is the etiquette of falsehood, she might not stir one inch without her father's leave, nor could she gain it for *that* end. Clothed in the virginal vesture of the church's daughters, she is free to enter everywhere, to speak—to console—to *touch*, just as another woman of the sacred sisterhoods."

"Then," cried Rodomant, in a voice of amaze, toned audibly by fear as well—distress—no, something wilder—passion. "Then, can it be—is it true that she will never—that she cannot, marry?"

"Not at all," answered Rosuelo, coldly, very carelessly, "her vows extend not to that degree."

"Thank God—for somebody—I mean who ever marries her—who will that be, I wonder? How shall I meet the prince to-morrow—to-day, —is it not this morning now?"

"Long past midnight, I should say, but I have no time-piece, to me it is not needful I feel the

hours, and my pulses tell me the minutes. I fear from your remark, that you are fatigued; if you ever slept on a bed so hard, take mine, and I will call you so early still, that the guards shall only think you are a very rigid catholic, that you miss no hours of prayer. As for me, I always sit up three nights in the week, it suits me and my business also."

"If so," said Rodomant, suppressing his first yawn, so long suspended by what to him was a trance of breathless interest, "I really will, for it is my fate to be sleepy at wrong times. And if I fell asleep before the prince, I might blurt out your confidence, lose my own head, and be the cause of your crucifixion." And he threw himself straight along the pallet, which pillowless reminded him of a stall in the cathedral of his native town, into which he had sometimes slily crept without his mother's knowledge—and yet where, shame to him, he always dropped asleep under the childish impression that nothing is so pleasant as to do anything in the wrong place.

Rosuelo passed the time in adoration—not of God, God-Christ, nor the Virgin, and he told no beads.

CHAPTER VII.

Rodomant was called after a few hours' sleep, and Rosuelo made him rise, though he had just reached that condition of mid-sleep, when sleep seems necessary to existence. Dead, dragging weariness, chained every limb, Rosuelo made him bathe his face, made him drink some water, and then follow him directly, that is, he strode out at the door, and so fast that Rodomant's feet which felt like feet in a nightmare, could not keep up with him. Just as they caught sight of the palace, and soldier-sentinels, the priest turned short and said—"Though we are safe now, to have it remarked merely that after your journey you hastened to return thanks, and afterwards spent some time with your confessor, this inter-

view of ours, as it is the first, must be the last; we must meet as friends no more. Last of all, let me beg of you, for the princess's sake, to take offence at nothing said or done to you, or to any one in your presence, while you are with her father. Please him also—humour him—it can do no harm, and may do some little good, if he is diverted, even for a time."

"Ah! before we part, tell me the reason the princess was so cold to me before her father—so kind afterwards."

"She is cold to all men before her father—to all men out of his presence also, as far as we have the right to know. Excuse me, but you and I are her servants—she would be kinder to a servant than to an equal."

Rosuelo here gave Rodomant greeting, and went his way.

Rodomant entered the palace, and reached his own place cheerily; a memory, despite the intervening terrors, was like a morning song-bird in his brain. Whatever Rosuelo had said to damp him, his natural sincerity told him what was in fact true;—the august girl had never communicated to any person the feelings, in the tones she had used to him. Yet his sincerity also saved

him from taking undue credit to himself, and he also had cause to call upon his philosophy; for the motive of her strange and sad sweet confidence had surely been Porphyro's recommendation! Yet Rodomant rightly felt, that it was extremely improbable she had confided those feelings so sacred, yet so simple, to a being like Porphyro —that human magnet, attracting all natures strong and keen—steel-like, as Rodomant himself, but yet who stood apart like a male modern sphynx, whose enigma, if written, remained to be read and translated, and who was the last child of creation it was likely a woman like the princess would—but there Rodomant stumbled over a harder recollection—the ring.

With that memory came burning thoughts, and rushing pulses, which drove him to the cool conservatory; and while refreshed there bodily, he mentally resolved that he would think no more of Porphyro until the princess told him—all. Then he reverted to Rosuelo, whose extraordinary personal charm removed, gave way to the impression, always a detestable one to Rodomant, of his insincerity, selfward as well as to the souls of others, of his craft *out* of, not in, his priestly profession. "I am truly," considered Rodomant,

"a fitter person for her to confide in, or confess to either, than he—for, a Catholic, he reveres not his church, a fanatic, he seems entirely faithless, and I suspect him of a hankering and hungry taste, for all his monkishness and melancholy." This satiric suspicion, albeit spiced with spite, was indeed true; and it was true besides that it was the last act Roseulo should have perpetrated as an honest man to become a priest at all. The poorest honest member of the religion he professed, bends before rude images reared in nooks by dusty waysides, or golden and gemmed doll-deities on marble shrines, with the same homage, the same simplicity, perhaps the same faith. They are idols—yet they represent what not only may be worshipped, but what men are commanded to adore. Rosuelo's idol, with all its divine idea, was human; God he neither adored nor loved, for he cared for Him, he felt Him, he longed for Him not. Rosuelo was a descendant, one of the latest and very poorest, of a noble family, once royal, too, and whose dignity, despite its poverty, could only be extinguished by the Church. Chosen in the bud of his boyhood a page for the princess, then in her infancy, he perused her beauty from its dawn—that his only

study, until her character unfolded too. But with so much beauty, and so grand a youthful grace as he himself possessed, it was not likely that he should be overlooked in a search through the court and kingdom for recruits to fill the ranks of that ideal soldiery—a royal guard. Appointed so to protect the person of the ruler, and his immediate protectors on foot, Rosuelo looked on horseback a picture of a warrior; dismounted, a knight in a masquerade. Along with the rest of his honourable cotemporaries, sharing that chivalric ordinance, he was hated by the people, as they hated all who reminded them of their prince—except his child. His beauty made no way with them, it had shone fairer scarred with noble wounds. Still Rosuelo prized his beauty; it might be all he had to decide his fortune with—his first throw and his last. Seeing the princess from infancy to childhood, from childhood to the prime of womanhood, he had fixed on her as his deity, his faith—his fate. On her his soul was set, and it was with him, as it might be with any, who, having a glimpse into heaven once, withdrawn, should determine on entering it without denying self, or conquering sorrow, or loving God and man. He permitted

himself, from the first moment he beheld her, to prophesy what she would become, as though she were created and designed for him; and such, as a stripling's dream, might have been pardoned; but it entered into his manhood as well, became its chief strength, and its entire passion.

The princess in no way was to blame for this sentiment run mad; as she passed into womanhood she lost nothing of her purity through her intense perception of her power over others—that is, men. Numbers she did not affect as *men*, she was infinitely too exalted, and yet too simple a woman; and while all praised her beauty, it was to many as inexpressive and unexciting as a statue placed in shadeless light. The reserve which veiled her passion none should pierce except the chosen, and if *he* came not, none. Then, with all her regal courtesy, she loved not to meet the gaze of men—not that she avoided it, but her eyes had a glance which looked through them and beyond them, as though they were shapes of mist that passed over the heaven of her contemplation. But to return to Rosuelo's brief and bitter career as a secular personage. He was one of the few who would have died to obtain her, but the only one who ever for

an instant thought it possible he might. He not only loved her as a woman, surpassing the bounds of lawful fealty which his conscience dared to sanction, but he let her know it; first enforcing her attention by his open and measureless regard, then addressing her, much as Rizzio addressed a princess more regal, yet less *over herself* a queen. Adelaïda, greatly displeased rather with herself than him, expressed no displeasure, and disguised the instinct of womanly aversion which his presence as much as his audacity had touched, lest she should at that moment drive one distracted to despair. But she expressed such cold decision; she discharged his suit so directly and so readily, that if he despaired not, he hoped no more. She interpreted the change in his mood, and therefore gave him generous counsel; and if imprudent, it was not the less kindly nor natural from a heart so young. She forbade him her presence, unless he entered it as married; and she advised him in few words to travel, and to marry—she would find means to reconcile her father to his temporary absence, and his secret should be sealed from all. Rosuelo did neither, but quite secure, as the most desperate and detestable might have been, of that

secresy, he obtained permission of the prince to enter a college, in aspiration after and preparation for priesthood. No other motive would have induced the prince to spare him; it was a merit to sacrifice to the church so handsome a soldier and loyal a subject as his own person; not to speak of the fact that the instant any member of the princely household expressed or implied a desire to quit it, he was thrust out, lest he should poison or betray the prince. Rosuelo worked hard, and his studies and ecclesiastical consistency refined his beauty, while they gave it the fascination of intelligence cultured to excess; and returning on the prince's hands as his own spiritual adviser—talismanic rather than practical—he easily found access to the convent the princess claimed as her favourite resort, from which he knew well she would not retreat on his account, because of the many who depended for what was dearer than life, on her connection with its order. So Rosuelo met her almost daily, though scarcely ever in the evening, hence his allusion to the angelic repast he had partaken of, in his conversation with Rodomant. In the first instance,

after his return, the princess had troubled herself little, for her ideas were so pure that, as she would have considered a married man necessarily freed from the lightest personal influence, so a thousand times more surely a priest must be self-protected from the same. Thereupon she received him kindly, treated him ingenuously, till sharply and suddenly, not gradually, she detected her error, and severely blamed—this time him, not herself. It was well for her that from the beginning of her independent life she had contemned confession and refused to confess. This decision saved her from what would have been insufferable communication with Rosuelo; though she would not have allowed him to become aware that he inspired her with repugnance or alarm; it was therefore fortunate that she could assure him she had it not in her power to obey that dictate of the Church, because she dared not confide to man what she did not even breathe to Heaven—that she loved not her father, nay, that as far as hatred could encroach on a heart filled and clothed with charity—she hated him, or evil in his image. When Rosuelo found that he was denied those

spiritual yet delicious confidences which had filled his dreams since his departure, he fell into the despondence where dwells no deity, the real and only depths of hell. Through all, his body was easily mastered, or rather his behaviour, his desperation was so strong that it clutched and defied from self-discovery all attributes, all faculties, all but its own blank fact. Therefore he could not only endure, but was permitted to see her; in the dungeon-dark, by the lantern gleam, at the pallets to which the tortured were dragged to regain strength for torture; they met, the priest and the princess, with no rank—nothing but her disregard—between them. So the broken in heart and limb, the scourged of frame and sick of soul, the tormented who would not have accepted deliverance, but had sought the snare, those saved for the wheel or the whip, for the scaffold, or the state-shot to end them, all listened to Rosuelo's exhortations without an echo in their sympathies: they confessed without relief, were absolved by him without finding consolation; and his prayers trembling eloquent as uttered music, touched their ears as the cold air struck the iron of the dungeon-walls. For, when he addressed the unseen Father, he

saw with his bodily eyes a form he would have endured their whole miseries at once, but to embrace; and if he sought the intercession of the holiest of human mothers, it was with another woman for him—not her own for them.

Meantime Rodomant had forgotten Rosuelo, for on returning to the sleeping chamber in which he had not slept, he found a suit of rich clothes laid ready on a jasper table. Whether placed there by fairy hands or human, he presumed they were meant for him, and particularly as Porphyro had bidden him to depart without special equipment from Parisinia. This costume was remarkable, gay, in contrast with those he had remarked about the throne; it was indeed only at balls that even the women of the Court wore white or colours, so perfect was the taste in fashion of the most depraved of men. However, Rodomant hesitated not an instant, but dressed himself, plumed hat and all, then resolutely and half-humourously surveyed himself in a mirror; for he was bent on flattering every mere foible of the prince; in a positive agony of fear lest by that person he should be sent away. It was fortunate he did not know, as Porphyro had kept to himself, with the fact of the treatment of court-musician

in court-fool, that it was a mummery of motley with which the office was invested, to distinguish it from all those offices more serious or sublime, held by the persons about the Court. So Rodomant took time easily as for a sport, and being dressed, until he should be sent for, lay down and slept out what remained wanting to him of his rest the night before, or rather the morning. At noonday the summons came.

Nothing in the palace resembled the penetralia of the prince. The chamber to which Rodomant was conducted lay in its very centre, at the heart of branching corridors, safe, so it seemed, as a cellar or a vault, for the ceiling was so lofty that only a bird could pass over it, and it was lighted from that roof alone. Luxury behind luxury, splendour shading splendour, seemed the order of its appointment; the superb pictures were veiled with velvet, the mosaic floors were hidden by carpets stiff with gold, and these again softened by depth upon depth of silvery fur, the skins of costliest animals. The tapestries were wasted on the walls, for an intricate gold net-work crossed them in every part, up which clomb living jasmines—or what seemed to breathe, but lived alone in malachite and ivory. The canopies to

every chair were silver orange trees, with fruit of gold; the chairs of perfumed wood were gilded smooth as glass; the tables inlaid with gems, and each a gem, were lost to vision beneath a surfeiting strew of priceless toys. The hue of the cushions and couches wavered between a pallid azure and the fairest flush of rose; and the seat the prince occupied had fringe of fairy brilliants and tassels of pearl in seed. He was not alone. At Belvidere was a harem, differing from those of the eastern world in so far as that it was not veiled from other men, nor masked to all besides its owner.

In a recess lined with blue enamel, powdered thick with stars of silver, was a chamber-organ in a case of goldsmith's work, chased and ornamented precisely like a huge Parisinian clock: this, Rodomant's comparison in his own mind; also a harp whose frame was studded with emeralds and rubies, and a pianoforte, which, from its exterior, gave the impression of a masterpiece in Chinese ivory-carving—these the musical furniture of the apartment. Rodomant who, quite self-possessed, could not bring himself to *approach* the prince, went to their recess as to his proper place, and the prince, struck favorably

with his modest deportment, graciously commanded him to play. Now Rodomant would have perished before he defiled his own special revelation, his own infant imaginings, his virgin and art-betrothed thoughts, by giving them an instant's utterance *there*. He knew his auditor, however, and his performance, given with the entire strength of his masterly execution, lent spirit and voluptuous sweetness to a theme at once solid and sumptuous—adaptive, yet not inconsistent with the reveries of a dramatic artist. Then the prince approved, and further, conferred with him, through an interpreter, taking a skimming flight over the fields of art in every age since that in which music was a cipher and a single string—for man. For the prince had that sharp brilliant cunning, which gleams from the eyes of the lofty among the lower animals—dregs of an intellect once lofty among the loftiest men; also his instincts had in them a power to select—dregs of a nature once fastidious as noble and impassionate; he, too, could play, for his muscles had an elasticity that, though it failed too quickly far for strength in warfare, still lasted him awhile on those soft ivory keys, than which his hands were fairer—dregs of a race superb, and once as untiring as the mountain-eagles.

At length Rodomant was dismissed, the point and conclusion of the audience being the prince's command for the production of Alarcos in the theatre of the palace that day week. At the moment the composer never even touched in his own mind on the difficulty of carrying out such a command, for he was sick and weary of his great companion, yearning to be alone; or rather for that which he expected to spring from his next solitary hour, a summons to the princess. None such came, and he heard no more of her that whole day, than if she existed not. It was quite as well for his artistic fate that the prince, bent on the instant gratification of the most refined sense he possessed, showed the same tyrannous decision employed to arrest and punish his conscious slaves, towards this whom he would have esteemed a slave as well, albeit an unconscious one. Rodomant he had no idea of leaving idle, and after the necessary noonday meal, and after rest, which was the only rule the prince could not defy nor tamper with, it being a law of climate enforced by nature, he sent for Rodomant to review the orchestra, which was further stated both by bandmaster and players, to have been in training for the required opera for months. This signi-

fied little to Rodomant, who, wherever he was put, contrived to *direct*, and to overthrow every system but his own on the best of grounds, that this alone was right. All this took much time, particularly as the prince was not only present, but seemed ubiquitous, dancing up to Rodomant; suggesting, whispering praise, and blaming loudly, with the strict etiquette of the criticaster, but producing no more effect upon his new conductor than though he had been not only deaf—but also dumb, and subsiding at last more like myrmidon than master, at the silent touch of the art-sceptre—calling up all the spirits from the orchestral deeps—for the great vibration swept the prince to his place as easily as a reed is taken by a rushing tide. Till very late that night Rodomant worked, long left to himself by the prince, who was too well acquainted already with the letter of Alarcos to bear the innumerable and analytic readings for long; the prince read score as excellently as some idiots are said to draw cats. As for those he taught, Rodomant had to go back to the very beginning—they were ignorant of *his* new song as children who mispronounce an unknown language; and in the process of correction which was infinitesimal and

strictly administered, of course his temper, never calm, surged out in passion that sounded terrible to those who comprehended not his words—for at present he could not communicate his will to them save through those pseudo-Italian phrases which may be termed the slang of musical art. Only a week to prepare Alarcos was in such-like phrase —to cram—there was no other prospect until he freely spoke their language. Dismissing them when the last gasp of attention turned into a yawn, a universal one it looked like, they vanished quietly; never had he in his own land beheld a brood of performers so pale, so orderly, so sombre —spiritless, or spirit-chained and dumbed. So he returned to his rooms in a desperate mood, with the finest space for music, the quickest if not most intelligent of musical readers, and perfect instruments, with sovereign voices; if he succeeded not in this his first effort, could he not take this tide at the flood, he should lose—not fortune, that were too light a loss to mention in comparison—but a golden fate to which the mightiest fame was as a handful of shrunken dross.

Little he imagined that for the first time now his powers of endurance had to be tested

thoroughly. Next morning, again bidden to the prince's presence, again made to play, enforced to hear, not only *his* playing, but the ravings of mystic sensualism peculiar to the prince in his most princely moods, and which baffled the moralist as an obscure disease eludes the physician; again the afternoon of arduous if world-derided labour—famished longing unhelped by sign of hope. So the next day to the next, with nights between sleepless, not dreamless—at last came the hour for Alarcos, and at least he must know whether indeed the princess lived — for that week, as for the blank it left between his soul and her, might have been the dread, quick week between death and death's death burial.

Fortunately for his mood, on the edge of despair, an angel plucked him from it. The princess was in her own seat, and though forced to turn from her face after his first intense inspection—so swift and vivid that it seemed to others but a glance—yet that apparition was enough not only to console but deceive him through its beauty. Though it was a fact that never had Alarcos gone so ill, so unlike the opera under a parent's interpretation, yet he had

never been so content with it before. It was well that the prince was chiefly occupied with the dramatic procession of the plot,—strange that those born to die by violence ever hanker after histories of violence or blood,—and also well that his standard of perfection and Rodomant's were not identical. So for the first time in his life Rodomant heard no blunders, detected no expressional error. He who in his brain's full energy—his heart's whole holiday—had discerned a flaw as minute as a single string the tenth part of an inch too highly screwed, or a deficiency as delicate as one flute-note dropped; and who over a slur too harshly rounded, or a forte thundered *issimo*, had fractured his self-respect by anger any number of times; this certainly the first exception.

For his fealty to her image and impression, he was this time rewarded; false as he was to that bride he had once boasted as a choice, his Art; and to the very woman who, refusing to accept his primal fancy for the love it was not, had indebted him to her so deeply, and won in return his ungrateful non-remembrance. However, before he left his desk, the princess sent for him; and first following close the page, her messenger,

he soon left the boy behind, and had to wait for him after all.

In the portion of the palace at once the most primitive and secluded, the princess dwelt when by day in her father's house. Rodomant found her in a chamber whose first furniture was intact, even to the paintings, worn by time; and the antique cressets, instead of lamps, which shed a solemn and semi-light. A taste, not severe, only naturally simple made melancholy by contemplation, ruled in every corner; books of every variety in almost every language, but not one richly bound; tables covered with letters and papers (chiefly petitions) never unread, oftenest answered in person; a plain pianoforte and harp, of finest mechanism; these last in a recess, as though not companions of every hour, but for recreation only. Not an unnecessary ornament besprent the room, just as none marred the heavenly and unconsidered, if not unconscious, beauty—of its haunting angel. Rodomant, so overpowered, that he lost not, to the sight, one particle of strength (there is no such self-possession as that sprung from strong emotion) stood meekly in her sight, and in himself desiring rather to die with her eyes so bent upon him, than to lose her yet again. And she, early schooled, in the experience that

calm grows out of suffering, and endurance from mental pain, thought him too distressed to allude to, or make apology for, the comparative non-success of his first experiment in her father's theatre. For she whose intellect was one of a more consistent integrity than his own—the impulsive one of the passion Genius, had perceived and realised the failure, with her great heart regretted it for him (the least of the strangers she entertained there, unawares) and with her sweet woman's instinct longed to lighten its remembrance by her sympathy.

"You must not think," she began, "that my father will be displeased."

"With what?" asked Rodomant, in a tone correspondent to his attitude—one of meek defiance.

"That your beautiful work was so poorly expressed and so fatally mis-interpreted,"—she used again, what must be called artist-slang, and which ought with all slang to be pronounced by truth as well as taste, illicit.

"Not at all," said Rodomant collectedly; he had gathered his stray wits to himself while she spoke—not of herself—and therefore he could rally his reasoning forces easily. "Not the least. Though I made the music, Alarcos is a

giant-child—the eldest should be. Firstborn of my fame, my brain's darling; it is a character not easily comprehended by the many, especially when they have first mislearned it. Yet for its defection—for its yielding your highness only slight and partial pleasure, pardon, oh great princess!"

He raised his eyes here, and literally blazed upon her—her own shivered momently, as if a sudden lightning crossed them—still she thought, and only thought, "what splendid eyes! a brain lit up by inward fires where the golden ideas are melted into form." But yet, how was it, she met not again that lightning? but her sweet eyes fell, and the lashes, golden-dark like cedar branches tipped with sunshine, dropped their delicate shadow on her cheek.

"I think," she said, "that all the blame lies with us—we at Belvidere I mean. The failure in perfection which I noticed, was entirely owing to the fact that you and your pupils did not understand each other—literally I mean. As for us, or rather them, education is not the order of the day in Belvidere, they learn nothing which nature teaches them not, and that she teaches is perverted in them. And though our tongue is exquisitely musical, and of a rarely choice con-

struction, it is least commonly made a study, of all the languages of Europe—perhaps because itself so nearly eastern. Yet is easy to understand, and easy, I hear, to learn. Then let me ask you, will you learn my language, and let me teach you? You would learn not only easily, but soon, as I understand your command of memory is so great, that you play the works of all ages without book or note. Once more, will you learn, and shall I teach you?"

It was well for Rodomant, that his natural breeding never failed in any circumstance—his passionate amazement vented itself here in the grace of gratitude alone.

"Your highness is far too generous, too great in condescension. I could not learn *so!*" Quite sincere in that.

Then replied she, with her tact as subtle as the air, "You shall have my master Rosuelo; I mean, when I say my master, he who taught me *your* tongue when, having read one of its fairy-tales translated, as a child, I felt a longing to repeat it inwardly as written in the beginning. I think my friend, whose birth and faculties are noble, would be an instructor to whom you could not object."

"No no," said Rodomant wildly, yet lowly—she noticed not his passionate confusion—"I will learn anything of anyone, to do the bidding of your highness."

Little knew she that in her easy renunciation of an intention on her part whose fulfilment would have been for him as dear as dangerous, she plucked away for that hour, his passion from its firm hold on sense. In an instant he comprehended that if he was to stay before her, he must control not only his words and manner, but his insurgent thoughts; she must be for him a princess—neither angel nor other woman.

"Do you dislike the heat?" asked she again, with an interest that was somewhat singular in a stranger's mere personality. "I took care you should have a cool corner in which to breathe."

The conservatory—yes, Rodomant knew what she meant. Yet something checked the expression of his gratitude—an instinct he could not conquer, though *then* unmixed with suspicion. Her generosity simply abased him lowlier in the heavenly humiliation of worship. He could not speak—and did not try—she thought him embarrassed; yet evidently wished for his society, or why not have dismissed him? This question

suggested itself, but to his honour he would not answer it internally.

"I heard that you had a mother," she went on; "why did you not bring her with you? that you might at least have had some one to speak with of your home."

"My mother? Your highness is too good—she went to Germany before I came."

"You must miss her very much," said the princess, in her benignest accents. That remark restored Rodomant more than could any influence besides have done; his humorous vein roused instantly.

"The idea of our wanting or missing each other!" he exclaimed, and his eyes lit up with laughter, though no echo of it left his lips. "She first left Germany with me when I went to England, that her apron-tie might restrain me from the haunts of the devil. And when I got on in Parisinia, and she found that I still lived in a small room, drank no wine, nor gambled, then she wanted to go and pay a visit to the people who knew her when she was dressed like any owl. I had given her some ornaments too, and she wanted to show them—she was too honest to buy any for herself, for she considered

my money was earned unfairly, because it was made by music."

The princess smiled. "It is a great gift of heaven to have honourable parents, whether learned or simple. I should like some day, when there is time, to hear your history."

"It is nothing," said he abruptly, "I am people-sprung, and if I have no defects of ancestry, it is because I know no ancestor."

"*You* need no pedigree," the princess thought, as she cast a glance on him from head to foot—the frame with its symmetric sternness, the eye whose strong brilliance attested taintless blood—a sign infallible, but by few interpreted. "We are all people-sprung," she added, "if truth be spoken, which is seldom—princes, kings, nobles, all were of the people once; the people raised them specially from among themselves, and bore the control because of superiority—an accident—on the part of those they raised. If the superiority exists not, if it ceased long since, are the people to bear control of those who represent it in a hollow superstition?" Then she changed her tone, indignation striking through it and over her spreading a momentary air of abstraction such as always possessed her when *that* theme

and was touched, obliviousness of all besides. "I cannot comprehend why it is lawful and righteous for the army of one country to fight that of another, for the thing called ruler in its own; yet against the laws of heaven and of honour to fight on its own ground, for its own rights, against the oppressor because he is their *own* oppressor, and not the oppressor of others."

"Civil war!" asked Rodomant, somewhat startled, quite as much because the subject seemed unfitted to her ideal impression, as because she was a royal woman. "Your highness, then, defends it?"

"Certainly, if any ought, it would be I."

"But they might kill you," he exclaimed, with horror in his voice.

"What a sacrifice!" she murmured; "a drop for an ocean. But if the restitution were only in such degree, I would gladly die—at least, I *ought* to die gladly, and I would willingly."

"Ah," thought Rodomant, bitterly, "she would like to live, and therefore could only be willing, not glad to die. Alas, for whom then would she live?—they shall not destroy her. They shall not kill you, princess," he added aloud, the echo to his thought; "there are many, too many, who love you; it would not be permitted."

Rosuelo's words returned upon him, words which, sprung from love, had seemed the birth of loyalty; and then came sweeping back to memory the fact that to the princess herself had the priest referred him for the elucidation of Porphyro's mystery. Quick followed the conviction, insignificant enough, how great to him, that Porphyro alone could have acquainted the princess with any circumstance of his life—his mother, his memory, or, for instance, his German fondness for linden trees. Had not Rosuelo asserted that Porphyro wrote to the princess? And now was Rodomant driven direct to the point which, quite unconsciously, he had been trying to avoid ever since he saw the ring on Porphyro's finger—that ring so attractive and yet obnoxious, so magic-like yet real—real as the man who dared to wear it, and whom it was impossible to invest either present or absent with an ideal attribute, yet who needed not the faintest pencilling of imagination to render him a mystery. Unconscious as Rodomant had been of his own shrinking from that point so dark yet definite, it was the unconsciousness of one instinct only—like a blind man's sightlessness, while yet his sense of touch is doubly if gropingly acute. So felt

Rodomant, if blindly, that something in some person, whether Porphyro, which suspicion he tried to strangle, or another, exercised over the princess an influence which was scarcely negative, though it might be unconfessed. Whether he would ever have gone to the point in words cannot be pronounced, for the princess, going to the dimmest corner and taking a book in her hand, remarked very carelessly, "I forget whether you ever saw Captain Porphyro, my father's friend, in Parisinia; yet I think it must have been so, as he spoke of you with familiar interest very unusual from him. He was there, I know, the whole time of your visit, but I understand he lives in great and necessary seclusion."

Now Rodomant studied to be as careful as she had been the reverse—in exact and ironic proportion.

"He lived in great seclusion, and I heard it was necessary, though I never could find out why. At first he was in prison, so I was told by others—so he told me himself; still I could never find out why—there seemed a fate that I should not hear. I saw him myself, for the first time, however, *not* in seclusion—it was at the house of a great actress. I wondered who

he was; and when I heard, and also discovered that he corresponded with the house of Belvidere, I recollected him with astonishment still greater, as a person so insignificant in appearance, and so limited in capacity." These words, both spiteful and untruthful, succeeded, if they were meant to wound. The princess turned round quickly, and threw on him a sad yet searching glance. His mien must have displeased her even, for she assumed that instant the loftiest manner she ever employed to any connected with the *people*, and which was lowly compared with the loftiness unmeasureable she used to every creature of the *court*.

"Everything must be begun, remember; you had to begin yourself, and though genius often triumphs young in art, it is not so with genius not inspired of art or poetry, yet God-inspired—yes, more than they."

"I presume it is Porphyro's genius to which your highness alludes." Rodomant's crest rose as his courage was required. Her mood, most regal, daunted him not the least. "Will your highness condescend to tell me what are its bent and character? I am as ignorant of either as of the crimes he appears to have committed, yet of

which I could make no one directly accuse him. I see what he is; what is it he would therefore *do?*"

"His genius is the genius to command—men as the greatest man, no ruthless name of ruler, no tyrant christened into king, no mockery of paternal oversight, but sympathy as strong as brother felt for brother; no shadow of a material sceptre to intercept from each heart the light of freedom; yet a rule, the firmest where the gentlest, which those ruled shall rather embrace than endure."

Blind instinct again burned strong in Rodomant. He could not have given a reason for it, but he felt as though he stood there to resist a delusion, no harmless one in itself, but which affected, in this instance, an angel to its hurt. She had ceased trembling, and if he had not heard the tender shiver, he detected a softness to which the tones of her voice had fallen—she dared not speak aloud.

"Princess," he said, with more reverence in his than she or any other had ever heard in it, "I think that his ideas, if of command, are not so fabulously faultless. I was with him once alone, and tired of the mysteries he makes, or

which others make about him, I enquired 'Who and what was he?' 'I am what you see me,' he replied, 'and as to who I am, you know my name, all that I am and mean—lies there.' So I said," went on Rodomant, his recollections rejoining link by link, 'Porphyro, that means purple,' I know enough Latin for that, princess."

"Yes, yes," she answered, hastily, forgetting to turn to the shade, full facing him with eager interest, "bold words of yours; what did he answer then?"

"He said just this, 'what more meaning therein than in red, or blue, or white?' But he said it so that a child could have understood his meaning—more, so much more, that it could not be expressed in words. I should say," added Rodomant, with that ingenious instancy which possesses imaginative persons to let out freely their fancies as they rise—often strangely and accurately representing facts thereby, "I should say—it strikes me, that Porphyro has turned a pun on his own name into a spurious prophecy. He would like to be Cæsar Augustus, if not to Rome, to some place or race—perhaps the whole world; one may as well dream great things as little—and design them too—who realises and who fulfils?"

The princess, far too interested to be angry, far too earnest to conceal her seriousness, stood as if on her defence of the absent. "I never knew a person of such great mind so simple—he is ever liberal. What he said he meant, what he says he always means—his words are ever few. He has not a dream or design of royalty—much less the idea imperial, which is destroyed even in imagination, at this age of the world."

Rodomant pressed his lips into a rigid line that he might not smile here; the man knew the man's nature better than did the angel-woman. He would not smile, lest he should interrupt her; he dreaded to hasten his own dismissal by check of her singular and still enthusiasm. The princess—most woman-like, least angel there—thought he shared her interest or that she had awakened his.

"As for his character," she went on, "the world holds not his equal. There is besides this to be said—he might rightfully have dreamed of ruling with crowned brows, for he is of a family whose source is traceable to that of the first emperor of Iris—Carlmagnus the mighty and the good."

"Ah! that explains much—and he repudiates

it?" questioned Rodomant in a slow distinct murmur.

"He repudiates it tacitly; he relies not on it for the fulfilment of his great intention, and indeed he is too greatly occupied to trouble himself with or to discourse about trifles. It is enough that, if he chose, he could revive the right; he asserts only his own fate—his star."

"Ah, I remember, what was it that man said—princess?" said Rodomant, training his tone back to deference. "There was a man I asked about him, a man who puts kings and queens for characters into his books, and who makes them do as strange, common things as are done by men and women too. That man told me Porphyro was star-struck. I thought the idea of people having stars was as old as that old idea of purple which vexed your highness just now"

"I do wonder I am foolish enough to talk to you!" exclaimed she, half-sweetly, half impatiently, "but as we began we will finish. Porphyro believes in a star, as we must have a symbol for the idea of destiny; it also represents the soul of man. A star is but another name for that individual intelligence which the hour of birth presents to Time for time, to Eternity for eternity.

Even the saints' histories so represent men's beings. One star differs from another, but they are innumerable: infinitely they people the far depths of space—space immeasurable, emblem of the immortality which contains the life of each created soul. Some are distinct as suns—fixed guides for men on trackless path or wave. Many are bright, but of lesser use and glory; thousands hang together in nebulous gleam—each contributes its light, yet as a light is not distinguishable. There are stars invisible to men, even as a broken ray of light's fair essence. But all are stars alike."

Rodomant's humorous perception pierced to the very germ of this wild notion, it was such as a woman of the princess's wit could only entertain under a spell, an influence which, albeit cast from the brain of another, commanded her heart alone, not her understanding. But he resolved to make no comment on such a theory; only to obtain information, and impart it.

"I do not see," he said, "how so innocent a person contrived to get into prison—the days are over when they put men into prison for being astronomers. Yet that he was in prison I know,

and more than that, he very nearly went there again for breaking his word."

"For what?" asked the princess, hurriedly, swept downwards, though most unwillingly from her starry trance. She evidently despised no man's opinion, if it concerned Porphyro's career or character.

"For breaking his word," persisted Rodomant. "The same man who told me he was star-struck, told me he was just let out of prison—Porphyro I mean—for an offence he was just going to explain to me, when he—the man who was with me—was himself caught hold of by soldiers in the streets, and taken to prison. Why was he taken? Actually because they mistook him for Porphyro. Porphyro had been seen with me that night, hence arose the mistake. How flattered I felt to have been remarked by officers of the state! Now, though I don't know why they had put Porphyro in prison the first time, yet I do know that the king let him out on condition—on his word, princess, that he did not re-appear in Parisinia. Yes, he was there; an odd thing for a man who always speaks the truth. He was there, not only then, but afterwards. I went to see him—he sent for me."

The princess here gave the troubled look peculiar to those who, in perplexity, will not try to unravel it, because they will not to themselves acknowledge its actual impression. To a nature of stainless truth, such perplexity is intensely painful; if unacknowledged, perhaps most deeply felt.

"I have not heard from him of his private concerns or conduct for a long time, though we correspond. He told me his intentions once, and it is enough—I believed him; I understood them. I believe him and understand them now. There is no one person great and good as well, whose enemies outnumber not his friends, and both occasionally act for the worst instead of the best—his enemies misrepresent, and his friends exaggerate. And so it must be till the time comes—till he can prove himself of himself alone."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rodomant, wickedly; he actually longed to make and to see her angry. "It was but a very little offence," my friend said. And he, my friend princess, hates the king, though he does not love Porphyro. He said it was just such a tiny crime, and insignificant, as if a child were to kick the crown on its cushion in the closet."

It succeeded not here—she even looked relieved. "I know nothing of it, nor of the hundred disagreeable circumstances which sow thorns in the right path for such a man. It will be as well for us to avoid that phase of any subject—the political side—for we can know nothing of it accurately, either I as a woman or you as an artist."

"But as a princess, would your highness avoid it? How so, and do your royal duty?"

"Perhaps, if such a thing ever came to pass; even then, were I called to reign, I might after all not govern." She spoke proudly, even triumphantly, with lifted head.

"What can she mean?" thought Rodomant. "Would she resign and retire into her convent? Yet why then look so royally?" Alas for him, his own heart answered the question—"There is *one* to whom she would resign the rule, while wearing its signet only."

"I have to tell you," she added, "though you do not deserve to hear, that you are better appreciated by Porphyro than he by you. He has for you a regard and admiration I never heard him express for anyone who was a non-politician before. You shall read a part of a letter in

which he writes of you." Just as if his opinion were inestimable and final. Now Rodomant was entirely regardless of it, whatever he was when face to face with the person of whom they spoke.

"Not now, princess, your most humble servant cares for no appreciation—for no approbation; I should say, saving only yours, and *that*, I have not earned to-night."

"His is worth much more than mine," she said, with her hand upon a casket she had been about to open, and she looked disappointed that the excuse for taking out the letter had failed. "It is worth much more, because music is my solitary charm, my dearest passion, and to him it is the merest pastime; to subdue him, its effects must rise indeed to the sublime. And you have that credit; he was positively affected by your compositions—they made him even eloquent."

"Condescending—charming!" cried Rodomant, and bowing low, mockingly, then fixed on her his eyes with a shy glitter. "My brain is lighted up to-night; I recollect everything. Some words of his seem to whistle past my ears, as they did that night—so sharp, distinct, and strong. But perhaps I may not have permission to repeat them, it is already late."

"You may," she said, with regal attitude, but downcast eyes: why did she not dismiss him?

"I was standing by this man with the imperial-sounding name, and, after a few remarks, in which we quarrelled, and *he* showed himself as ignorant of art as I am of his offence against the king, he added, 'If I were at the head, I would encourage art,' just as if genius could be planted, watered, and made to grow. Then, princess, he turned aside to me, and he dropped these words into my brain—they ring there yet when I remember them—'I, who never thanked man before, I thank you, for you have helped me, you have shortened my way, perhaps by many steps!' Princess, since you have stamped him with your approval, and have condescended to enlighten me as to his star, a meaning shines through those words, which I no more perceived in them *then* than we can see the stars at noonday. I did not go out in Parisinia more than I was obliged, and yet the wind sings through everyone's own keyhole; it said very distinctly how discontented the people were; and I for my part never saw anything so terrible and savage as their love for bloody stories, whether of love, or war, or suicide. For that they liked Alarcos—for that I sickened

of it the moment it was made clear to me. When Porphyro paid me that compliment, which then I did not know how to digest, he had only heard Alarcos, he had only seen their enthusiasm—or rather mania—for it. Then what meaning could he have had, princess?"

She stood with steadfast lids that would not lift themselves, a haughtier grace seemed to crown her brow, but round her lips crept, blending with their disdain, a helpless expression, which would have deterred any other man from straining on the subject further. Not so Rodomant, it but strengthened his inexorable longing to torment—born of a blacker pang of his own most secret heart.

"It could be but one meaning, *I* think—that my music, exciting the people so madly, might drive them all the faster to a revolution; little signs precede great events sometimes, and strengthen them to fulfilment. He said by *many steps* I might shorten his way—no, had shortened it. Was not that fighting against heaven's set decrees? And worse,—for those only can *do* who can *dare* everything,—did it not show a want of perfect confidence in himself alone?"

For a moment the princess looked at him; sur-

prise at his perseverance, his audacity, supplanted every other sensation; and for that moment her glance seemed gathering quiet wrath—her breeding would have condescended to no other. Yet it was not in nature—woman's nature—to be angry with Rodomant; his quaint, bright glance, wholly unworldly, yet half-heroic aspect, above all the unconscious fascination which lurked even under his impertinences, all held her fast; too generous to resist the spell, she smiled, and quite drew back her hand, which had wandered from the casket to a chased bell lying near it; had she meant to summon her servants, and abash him by dismissal in their presence? It mattered little, for the fair hand dropped to her side, and was lost in the dark folds of her dress; the other hand grasped her rosary, but in reality was pressed upon her heart, to keep down inwardly the soft and shattering pulse, unknown to man, and to all women but very few. Had Rodomant known this, he would have died rather than add to that still extremity of repressed emotion; but he saw nothing except the smile which bathed her aspect in a fresh and vivid beauty, more bewildering, if less sweet, than her proud and tender gravity. He would do, say, risk anything, to remain as long

as possible in her presence, to procure even a few instants' further respite from the despair which waited to arrest him the moment he should be left alone. There was but one means left him, and he sold it, little suspecting what he should acquire in exchange. Even were it his last resource, should he not crush her pride with the knowledge of that—her secret?

"Princess, I must say one thing, whatever are Porphyro's faults, he is not ungrateful, and I should have recalled that before. He wears the ring faithfully, I saw it on his finger. How beautiful it is!" He uttered each word slowly, to lengthen her suspense. She started back a pace, bewildered and unblushing, he could not doubt her innocence.

"What ring?" she asked, unfalteringly, "I never saw him wear one, nor any ornament. Yet doubtless he has many, his mother left jewels, I know."

"A ring," said Rodomant roughly, his reverence momently impaired by the baffling of his design to torment. "A ring with the portrait of your highness, the finest I ever saw; fine for minuteness, fine for finish. I had a fancy, now a fallacy, as I perceive, that only your highness's

own hand could have guided so fine a brush to such rainbow-ravellings of colour. And then, what more common than for a princess to bestow even a gift *so* costly upon one who serves her, or who pleases her equally, a soldier too, not a court-musician, that soldier's tool, though for what ornament he meant me in his armoury, or to what use in the future he means to bend me, break me, or melt me down, I cannot tell any more than I can tell from what genius he forced that ring, seeing it was not given him."

This last dying gasp of spite hurt no one but himself. The princess heeded him no longer, he saw that, and he also realised that he had filled her with delight—for another. Her cheek glowed, the glory in her eyes grew tremulous as starlight seen in quivering water; her brow brightened like sunshine falling on a lily. Sweet smiles lit the roses of her lips, not swift as wont, but lingering; yet even when she again addressed him, he felt the smiles were not for him, but for some delicious hope to which *he* had lent half-assurance.

"I never painted a ring, I do not paint," she said, so graciously that he would have preferred her severest wrath. "Nor did I ever give a

ring to any man; but Porphyro paints, I know, and so minutely that I have seen a picture of his on a watch-paper fitted to a watch no larger than a thumb-nail. Have you seen any other of his paintings?" this indifferently, of course, that she might hear more.

"Dear, yes," said Rodomant, his vexed passion sinking into sullenness; "I saw a great picture finished up small, of Parisinia, as he means to make it—he told me so. A city as unlike Parisinia now, as the great golden globe, called moon in Belvidere, is unlike our shrunken silver phantom called a moon in Northland. Can any but a king re-make a city, or another but an emperor give to an empire resurrection?" But he repented returning to that well-chafed string, after the other and sweeter he had touched. For the princess, resolutely stretching her hand this time, shook loudly the silver bell, and turning towards the door till it was opened by a page, saluted Rodomant in silence, and withdrew. Silent as she was, however, he had to see her last with the blissful blush he had himself called up, brightening on her face to a calm more tender. For truly, whether she felt or no, whether lightly or deeply,

for Porphyro, never before had he contributed the least to her woman's peace or happiness—he had but stirred her heart to restlessness on its first awakening.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHATEVER she did that night, whether she wept her fill of those delicious tears whose fountains, like those of the one agony prepared for every soul, break up but once, or whether she slept and dreamed, and smiled upon her dreams, Rodomant never knew, for in after days the bliss and agony, alike extinct, had no ghosts to give up from the grave. But as for him, whether for his misconduct or his presumption, he suffered enough that night—not enduringly but openly. The control of her presence taken from him, and the freedom of solitude flung over him instead, he passed the hours in that deep heart-raving which, when the brain is lucid, cannot waste itself in words. But for the

passion for renown which yet held fast his mind, leaving his heart to its wildest dreams, his after-works had never been, for he would have destroyed himself. As it was, he walked with crushing footstep, up and down, and round and round, backwards and forwards, from one chamber to another, like a forest-animal caught fresh, and possessed of several cages instead of one. The night seemed but an hour, and a short one too, for, say what physiologists will of physical pain drawing out time immeasureably, the spirit's anguish quickens it; were it not so, it could not be endured at all, for the power to suffer would be exhausted by the demand upon it; the pain, as of the body in a swoon, would cease. Then comes the blank arousing—so it came to Rodomant in the bright morning, when light sickened, and the rare perfumes touched the sense like the common odours—with disgust; when the nerve-strength too quickly drawn upon, had not a sand left in the glass, and before vitality returned again, there must be that blank in being, and the blank alone. Truly, if pride be love's antidote, pride is no antidote for passion at its height. Mad, undignified, even disloyal as Rodomant's conscience

convicted the state of his heart to be, as soon as the short sharp anguish had dispersed itself and left room for slower tortures; yet he could conscientiously excuse him by very means of a torture sharper than all. Black as was his jealousy, it was not cold like envy; it burned and was consumed not, and by its very flame he saw the fact, cleared further also by an instinct that seldom erred, and never on his own account, that one *not* above him, not his equal in some respects, was preferred before him. Every instance of her gracious kindness, before so infinitely dear, turned its thorn-like pang into his heart; for the sake of the regard she bore another had that regard been shown, her very appreciation was not genuine, but adopted on the recommendation of that other; she had taken even his own genius on trust. He despoiled her sweetest wreath of charity in the cool of that blank morning, tearing up the pale flowers of the conservatory, rending the fair ferns, and breaking branches off the linden, so that the nightingales shivered in their unveiled nest. He even gnashed his teeth in honour of Lady Delucy, and cursed her wordlessly for having excited him to write a song-memorial of no memory he had ever known, and

to blast its prophecy with ruthless sadness. Still, the very blank excluded not the prudence which does not belong to passion, but is inevitable in love.

"If I betray myself I am lost," thought Rodomant, "if all be lost not now. But no, she only went that I might not disturb her thoughts of him, ungrateful as all women are."

But, ungrateful as she was, she had not forgotten him, nor her generous intention towards him in the very least fulfilment. At eight o'clock a message came from Rosuelo to know whether Rodomant would take his first lesson in his own room or the priest's. Rodomant chose the latter alternative, anxious to get away from the scene of his night-terror, and further having a partiality for the vicinity of the prison-palace in which the princess slept.

Rosuelo, who had forbidden Rodomant to visit him again privily, had of course set his negative aside on receiving, almost with the dawn, the commands of the princess. Still it was evident he intended to make the visit one of necessity and strict employment only, for the table was covered with books, and he only just noticed Rodomant's entrance by bowing, without looking up. But

Rodomant took no notice of the books, beginning instantly, "I heard all about Porphyro last night, that is as much as she knows or thinks she knows —you must tell me the rest."

Rosuelo, amazed at this abrupt remark, looked up—saw the shadow of the terror so dark below, and the blank above it, lying pallid on Rodomant's face. An expression at once all blank and all darkness—how could it be interpreted? what was there to read? Yet Rosuelo saw, felt—as deep as his human nature went, was pierced with sympathy. "Another victim," he murmured, in his low rich tones, "and the slayer innocent." But as Rodomant seemed too absorbed, or too exhausted, to have heard the words, he added, "and what think you now of Porphyro—I told you of whom to inquire."

"I hate him," said Rodomant, between his teeth.

"Hard words and dangerous," said Rosuelo with a guarded glance, "nor is he hateful."

"Who loves him then?" cried Rodomant, with eyes he took no pains to veil, flashing defiance of the assertion.

"The princess would tell you, thousands—and that tens of thousands will. I wonder she did not say so."

"Because I was placing facts before her, and she was rejecting them as truths—there was no time. I tell you I come to you to hear the rest —and will. Is the man bad? that is of some consequence, it seems to me, to be ascertained by those who if they hate him, do not hate her."

"Porphyro bad—I think, on the contrary, that his heart is kind, and disposition inclined to benevolence. I even think that in his self-estimate he is not willingly deceived, for I do not call his an intellect of lofty cast, and he has gazed so long on a point in the distance where lies the Possible, that his mental vision is weakened and distorted. Then again his honour is of a homespun quality, and he would be glad to shift it for one of superior material, on the plea that every man must better himself in order to better others."

"Blue and crimson he would change it for—just what I thought, and suggested to the princess—she was exceedingly angry, though she made no noise—I saw that."

"I wonder you provoked her, it was surely not worth while, even had you been one of her own country, and a subject born; for she is far too royal in her nature's essence, whatever be the freaks of her benevolence, to punish her estate—never would she actually stoop."

"I don't clearly see," said Rodomant, who did not. "Of course she would never stoop, because the lowlier she descended in rank, the loftier she would be raised above it in *herself;* it was quite worth while to tell her what I knew about Porphyro, for she thought too well of him. It might make her miserable without cause if she discovered her mistake too late. Therefore, I do not understand why you say it was not worth while."

"Because she would not, with all her devoted spirit, her passionate singleness, her proud innocence, *marry* any but a crowned head. *Love* she might, though far too feminine, and of virtue too refined to retain such love even in its least degree, after the claims of one legitimate had been assumed by her."

Just like other men, Rosuelo settled that the princess would not marry any man in rank below her own—because she had discouraged himself.

Rodomant made his eyes look owlish. "Of course I never thought she would marry any but a crowned head; that was exactly the reason I thought she might marry Porphyro."

Rosuelo turned on him one of those glances that combine pity for ignorance, with contempt for assumed knowledge.

"Your misconception is quite natural. Of course you heard his own version of his late failure?"

"I did not know that he had ever tried in anything to *succeed*. We never spoke of what is called his political offence, though I heard others speak of it, but could not even gain the initial of it."

"He simply desired an audience in private of the king; and the king after causing him to be searched and found unarmed, allowed him one, in which he requested (and seemed to expect) his majesty to resign."

"To him—of course?"

"Not the crown, so he pretended, only what *makes* the crown—the prerogative under its natural restraint from *without*, and its seal and sign, the approbation of the people—even that he denied, wishing to take to himself, or to transfer to any *one*."

"The princess said she had never heard of that—was that a lie? a lie on lips like hers?"

"No more than if she told you she did not believe in purgatory, which I am sure she will never experience. This pretender took care to sow her mind so thick with germs of thoughts and

dreams most dear to her, all promising for harvest the exaltation and happiness of humanity, that he left no room for prejudices to be struck by others. I also believe that he confided to her his plans without their *name*, for there are two ways of lying, one called foul, the other fair; the first is to substitute falsehood for fact; the second to imply a little more, or confess a little less than the whole and perfect truth. He adopted the latter mode, and she who is of honour like snow under its first crust for purity, believed him of course. She does believe what she sees and hears, that is why joy has never blossomed in her youth."

"I can scarcely think, however, that he meant to deceive her—he may simply withhold his final intention until fulfilment, to add to her surprise, perhaps to what *he* fancies would be her *gratitude*. For *I* fancy I can trace, under that iron calm of his, an arrogance which even passion would not soften, and *that* would make him love to *raise* her, not for love's sake, but his own. What then —tell me—what is his destiny to the letter, in his own esteem?"

"Of course it is obvious—he harps on the idea that he is descended from Carlmagnus, which

is just possible, though I believe it not;—but to adduce such a fact, even were it a fact, in support of claims that held to it in the beginning, is, to say the least, a fault in worse taste than the crime of treason simple. Why there are a dozen families in any civilised country who might put forth as clear a right to royalty, being at the fountain head, not traditionally but historically, of royal blood. And to hint at such facts as claims, even in the heat of delirious ambition, is to commit an error against the laws of nature, to go back in the world's being instead of forwards —moral sorcery, if indeed it could be done."

"That was, I suppose, the two-sided offence—to believe in one's descent from a dynasty extinct, and to desire the annihilation of the present pretending unselfish motives. What part he means to play in process, even if in the end his aims succeed, I cannot think, nor how the people are to be governed."

"The trick might possibly be tried, of the elected few, as was once played and swept into anarchy's quick chaos. It might so happen, but, without *his* intervention in the necessary progress of events, and if Porphyro thinks he could gain control even over that few, I fancy him mistaken;

there are a dozen men in Parisinia, whose brains, if capacity were in the ascendant, might rule the world—they have also not only heads, but voices, it is little likely they would need or call for a mouthpiece such as his. A person so deficient in intellectual habit, and so limited in expression I never saw. If ever the reins were put between his fingers, it would be as though you or I, or any other not trained a cavalier, were bidden to break a horse of the first breed freshly caught."

"That is in the blood—the Arabs are not taught except by nature—I also believe I could hold a horse fast myself, and make it own me. However, you are a priest, and I have as good as lived in a cloister—we both differ, and either of us may be right or wrong. *I* believe, that if that man asked the king to resign, he *will* resign, without his asking, perhaps; if he means to be at the head of the few, then they will wake up and find him there; if he has determined he will govern all, he will do it, but not as the princess thinks. For he is famished, dying of thirst, mad in the core of perfect sanity, for Fame; what he considers its crowning heaven as well as its ultimate earth-point; and that is not what you would consider it, nor I. If it were the imperial idea

he wished to realise, the clouds would descend from the sky to weave purple for his living pall, and the stars would shape a crown for him, did man refuse."

Rosuelo shook his head slowly, but was evidently careless to dispute the matter, and Rodomant detected his weariness of that topic—changed it to a nearer interest. "I cannot understand one thing, and that is, how Porphyro became at home in such a court as this, a person without parentage as they represent him."

"That is not strictly true—his father held an insular position, and his mother was noble—on her side he might take the title of count. But such medium rank he repudiates, he never would adopt it, proof most rational of all that he requires the *utmost*, and half expects it. Still repudiating the title, he did not renounce the privileges understood by it, and has tried the pulse of every living monarch so to speak—few even touch thrones from such a distance, and there seems a fate that no regnant should resist his influence; well, it is true that certain fishes require a peculiar bait. He was here, somewhat on sufferance for a time, still on a visit to a chief nobleman of ours; and during that space chanced one of the innumerable emotions of the people

that have yet reached a *crisis*. Among a hundred arrests or so, one soldier had been shot for mutinous grumbling over his rations, and this offender's twin-brother watched for the prince's carriage next time he went to mass in public—he had to wait a month, though that was an extraordinary instance, to return thanks for the repression of the rebellion that had hardly breathed. This brother aimed a pistol-shot at the prince, and Porphyro, who was on horseback, rushed before the window-glass when he saw the man's arm raised. The glass being shut, there was in reality little fear, except for the glass itself, and further the carriage was moving rapidly. However, it happened, fortunately for Porphyro that the shot brushed the margin of his hat, so that there was at least a *show* of danger averted from the prince, who exaggerated it as all cowards do, and who never forgot the intervention. For he knew full well, whatever he knows *not*, that few indeed would interpose their bodies between him and death, except those *paid*, and Porphyro at that moment had not *been*. Once here, I mean at court, he ingratiated himself as subtly as an infection—to my perception as little agreeably, but as *sure;* gave advices which were approved

but never followed, flattered habits he did not personally adopt; was most provedly a hypocrite, unless he was a solitary exception, and detested *not* the head *here*. Worst of all, least comprehensible, he bewitched her. Well, saintesses as well as saints were tempted, and angels fell."

"If so," said Rodomant, "it proves at least that the fascination of ugliness is as strong as the power of beauty." He could afford to say this, not being beautiful himself in his own eyes.

"I believe," said Rosuelo, "that a creature such as she—if there ever existed such another face in angelic archetype, does not *perceive* ugliness, nor is subject to the antipathies which invade the senses of coarser beings. That man attacked her in a principle—an abstraction he assured her might be realised. As *man* she understands him, perceives him not, she *sees* an idea which her virgin and unbetrothed will asserts to be his image—that is all. Could you see her, as she is often, and perhaps at this very instant, you would not be astonished that ugliness, as you call it—that is, the impression which negatives beauty—has over her little or no power. Her senses seem charmed

to unconsciousness in the heart which embraces all humanity; charity annihilates her tastes—otherwise frail of body as she is, I see not how she could have ever lived so long."

"Where is she at this moment, then?" The thought of seeing her again quickened into yearning.

"In one of the prisons, there she spends all her mornings, a day for each in turn, most frequently underground, as there lie the criminals whose crimes rise highest in their intention, and who are the hardliest revenged upon the divine, or diabolical right of royalty.

"Well," said Rodomant, courageously, "you have been very good so far, and have told me some charming little episodes of real romance, pray crown your kindness, take me with you and let me see her, how she looks, I will not speak to her. As for doing anything else, I could as easily write a sonata on the sky, as read a grammar lesson, yet I promise you I will learn double to-morrow, treble the next day, and so on. My memory is certainly prodigious—Porphyro told one truth there for all his lies. And as for those eternal sentinels, I shall pack up the books and carry them on my shoulders, and just you tell me

what 'good day' is in your tongue, and I shall silence their wonderment with it. 'He has been learning of the priest,' they will say. For of course the priest is the finest scholar in all the country."

Whether, out of routine, even a man of the church prefers a vision of his material paradise, as even to the wisest among the race of the wise, "stolen waters" were the most refreshing, it cannot be said; but it is certain that after proper resistance to the unruly appeal, Rosuelo gave in, and consented that Rodomant should accompany him in what for him was an exceptional visit in the forenoon. Passing the long wall of the convent, a quarter of a mile through corn-fields bordered with shrubs, full of fruit and blossom at once, brought them to the city, the capital of the princedom of Belvidere. At a distance it lay against the sky's deep sapphire, like a cluster of domed pearls, and ruby-pointed pinnacles; even near at hand the ruddy brick and stainless stone burned rosily and dazzling in the sun-pierced clarity of the atmosphere, close-blazing upon noon. Inside the gates, true, still the domes swelled palpably, and the spires pointed calm as needles cast in marble, but alike too much above

the eye gazing onwards in suspense, to attract them from what showed at hand around. Close streets like lanes of London; unpaved, dingy roads, paths traceless, dry seas of drifted dust, all baked beneath the burning air, struck Rodomant like a hard material dream, and in that slow furnace he nearly swooned, before the point of desire was reached. He and Rosuelo seemed the only things alive, except the insects, whose crowding clouds made the only shade between men moving and the sun—water-carriers were flung in the full blaze beside their vessels, and fruit-sellers watched their blooming perfumed baskets like tinted statues. But in the hot quiet town at length Rosuelo paused. There was a low thick portal, leading to an immense courtyard; they entered this, and here men moved in plenty—the eternal sentries, as Rodomant called them; even they seemed to march wound up. On the flags of the courtyard the sun struck cruelly; Rodomant cast his eyes wildly around for shade—there was none all over the numerous studding windows, and their innumerable thwarting bars — and gladly, at Rosuelo's bidding, he rushed into what was the twilight glimmer of a broad stone vault—the

last above ground, and which left them as they touched the top step of the flight that, when the door was closed behind them, felt like winding blackness; so that dizziness, together with the dark, would have unsteadied the firmest footsteps. As to Rodomant, the steep and tortuous twists were hideous as a nightmare in the chasm which, to a sensitive brain, darkness unmitigated makes in being. "Why did you not bring your lantern?" he enquired, feeling at the same time for Rosuelo's frock, at which he plucked for safety, to convince himself he still could *feel*. "There are lights below already—this is not my usual time. Here we are," he added, and truly at that moment Rodomant touched straight ground. "I must ask you not to speak nor whisper, and do not go too near. I will bid them open the door a little way, so that you can see. But it must be a moment only; when I touch your arm we must return."

Then the priest uttered a pass-word in his lowest tone, and what seemed invisible hands moved rustlingly; with great, though almost noiseless labour, a door, which was but a breach in a wall seven feet in thickness, closed rudely by a mass of stone, was heaved back about a

foot. Through the crack gushed a yellow glimmer, and showed to Rodomant the unfailing sentinels, looking like mailed ghosts, as they glided back to their dense niches outside the door, and there stood motionless. With that same yellow glimmer there floated outwards an unctuous, tepid odour, indescribable for its disgust, but loathsome to the full as that scent of corruption after death which we shut, on its first hint, into the coffin. Rodomant was so intensely sensitive to it that his first impulse was to take advantage of the yellow ray and rush upstairs—it actually pre-occupied him to the exclusion of the princess's memory.

"Do you see her?" asked Rosuelo, who was behind the door, in the faintest whisper, and the question recalled to him—what? that she, of her own choice was there, and in the midst of That whose very verge of discomfort he found it so hard to approach, to which his strongest effort of volition only could bind him, even for a few fleet moments. Still sick—brainsick with the reeking human odour, heartsick with the labour of the pulse in the airless pressure, he strained his eyes—dim also with the double faintness—to pierce the unscattered breath-mist which for-

bade pure light to live there—did it enter. Yet torches by hundreds were hanging from the sides, their reflexes blotched widely on the universal glaze of damp which lined the walls, and the rills of moisture that crawled slowly downwards like the toad's cold trail. There seemed hundreds of pallets, or rather beds, for though all flung upon the ground, not one was without its pillow. By each pallet, too, there seemed a woman, each robed like each in sad and solemn vesture; all *seemed* like phantoms, gleaming steadfastly within a dream on the edge of awakening—a conscious dream. But there *was* but one —one life, one heart, one soul, for him who gazed, whose dim glance as it fixed on her grew clear, whose instinct would have isolated her amidst the whole seven heavens of perfect spirits. Not his alone perhaps—he saw without envy in that hour, that every eye fed on her, devoured her gestures, drank consolation from her beauty —the true use of beauty given to woman. Eyes sunk so deeply that they seemed but eyeless sockets — eyes glaring with the black fire of fever wrung from strength — eyes gleaming like pallid meteors from hollow half-skeleton faces, and eyes whose owners, happier than

the rest, retained the softest instinct of humanity, with vision shivered through their tears; all these surveyed her openly, with hunger and thirst for her presence—she shrunk not from that dread, intense regard—helpless yet safe with those stripped of all law but that of gratitude; nor from their contact either. For as many as had strength to crawl had crept long before from their beds, lay all about her feet, and clutched her garment's hem, while she bathed a wound of foulest stench, and bound it, smilingly, caressingly, as a tender mother the thorn-scratch of an angry rose on her infant's fragrant skin. Fresh fruits lay in their baskets on the ground, not a berry spoiled; white loaves stood there uncut, and bottles through which the wine, untasted, blushed. Rest, from her own forgotten and conquered weariness, dropped sweeter on their souls than sleep, and every wild unruly nature found its home in her world-embracing heart. "Oh that I were one of *them*," said Rodomant to himself, "then were I not too insignificant to be loved."

"The time is up," murmured Rosuelo, and touched him on the arm. And they left heaven below them under the ground, to miss it in the light of day, that great celestial mystery the firmament, and the solitude where She was not.

CHAPTER IX.

It is strange, yet common, to hear this age pronounced the least romantic that has been born of time. To call it the most reasonable were not to lie, for ideas the greatest, and aspirations of the strongest flight, must be explained and realised to be understood, or shared by men with Man. If adventure and invention be initials of Romance, then this is an era of its triumph, and as for heroism, its grand component, heroes are numbered in a nameless crowd, their names preserved in heaven, too many for record on earth. As for tragedy, the second element of romance, its influence whispers in a universal wail, calm under-current of great humanisation's encroaching tide. Nor does it appear that the revelations of

science, light stronger than the sun, nor its dreams, fulfilled in iron, have lessened the delight of mortality in art, in metaphysics, in imaginations. If more men write verses, fewer men make poetry; it never can grow wild as weeds, nor be trampled under foot so, like those vain scattered stutterings of the former, idiots self-invested with the paper-crown. If many more breathe sympathies with themes befitting brotherhood into the ears of the great family, as many hide their selfish feelings, how sweet soever, from the world. The very genius of the period, late crowned with success more perfect than ever was doomed to man — the genius steam, is as beautiful in its might and regularity as the type it engenders — self-command. Its very special and dominant peculiarity of forcing men into involuntary personal connection with each other has failed to wring from a single bosom its secret either of bitterness or bliss. Some such thoughts as these, and many fancies more, too fine and fleetly spent for words, occupied Lady Delucy, sitting at home in her country castle, as isolated, even literally, from all external circumstance, as though no railway spirit shot hourly across the land its level of dark lines cut through the rosehung hedges, and

past the surges of the yellowing wheat. Then its deep tremendous voice, so terribly distinct in frost, so mysteriously distinct all seasons from that of thunder or of the sea, mixed on this mellow morning with the strong warm rush of the west wind, now bringing up fast-flying racks of clouds to bathe the bright earth in shadow, now sweeping heaven as clear as the circle of a stainless shield. The lady who sat in her favourite room saw nothing of these changes upon the daylight, heard nothing of the voices of the wind and steam; yet was she not idle in her pre-occupation, her mind was indeed busy in revenge for the freedom of her hands and eyes. Nor had she dropped one good, nor taken up one useless habit for any change in her opinions or disappointment in any one she had ever trusted; and she possessed the virtue so rare and excellent, of positively, not neutrally, forgiving those who had brought her pain, so that honestly as well as generously she could rejoice with them or weep. That there was more than enough romance in this real world she knew—if she had not experienced; bitterly she bemoaned the fate of those in whom no commonplace tests of discipline or disappointment could destroy or blunt the

sharp and fatal sensibility which aggravates trouble to torture, while it heightens to ecstasy content. Singularly enough, what had made her heart more tender, and her sympathy more true for such, had done for her character what no previous experience had accomplished, no lesson of life enforced. While the person who had made her earth heaven, in all but the fulfilment, was at peace in the heart's prosperity, she had never felt her own deep fondness falter, her unclaimed allegiance, or her secret faith. But, once beholding him alone amidst the ruins of his happiness, the crest of his great pride in the dust, the flower of his love torn from its bleeding stem, she found in her pity, for her passion a perfect antidote, an enduring cure. Perhaps it was strangest of all, that with that soft passion vanished its softer shadow—melancholy; life no longer a burden, borne for love's sake alone, became at length true life for others; her sympathy was warm, not a spark struck by benevolent impulse from colder charity; her heart opened with her hand. As for the wild words, whose error the hour excused, which Diamid Albany dropped in her ear, when freshly stung by misery, they had melted from her memory as

though unspoken, the very time she met him next, when he came to her for the help which a strong man will only take from a woman, in the need he will confess to her alone. To look to spiritual causes, which form regularly as the least occult, it was, of course, the very fact of her former passion's regeneration into unmixed love, that brought the heart too strong to break and be at rest, near hers. It was now but the bloom of July, and not a year since Geraldine had left her husband, and Rodomant the protection of his first friend. Of both these, and another, whose interests were dearer and nearer home, she sat and mused. More precious were his interests than theirs, for reasons which appeared to her as just as they were extraordinary, in the course of events. When Geraldine left England, it had been in publicity's full light; it was said to all and believed by all, save those who had seen the secret, that she had only gone to Italy for a season on account of her sudden illness. Everybody except the immediate circle she left, and the relation to whom she returned, also believed that her husband accompanied her, it being then full recess; particularly as Albany reappeared after Christmas again in London, and

went to work as usual in the tread-mill of the political slave and aspirant. But when time crept on, or flew, and it was clearly evident that he never left England nor town for a day—not even at Easter this year—it began to be surmised—was whispered—then noised about, that there had been an actual though utterly unaccountable separation—unaccountable because Diamid's devotion to his young wife had given rise to many an ignorant comment and sickly sneer. On the top of this foundation-stone for calumny, the infraction of so faultless a domestic system as that of England, a superb pyramid in honour of the living was rapidly erected; the most insignificant facts, the vulgarest little anecdotes, supplied by servants and time-servers, were heaped together, and held by an amalgam of aspersions, too carefully or carelessly framed for libel. The crown or apex of this fine moral structure was a large book, which appeared so seasonably that it seemed actually probable it had been prepared on purpose—a life written without authority of the living, a memoir as diffused and laboured as ever perpetuated the true or false fame of the dead—an anonymous book, a bad book—so bad that,

like an arch-hypocrite, it deceived its own author; and when it had been greedily perused by the just and the unjust, and not suppressed, he drugged his conscience with the flattering falsehood that he had done not only his duty, but a service to the state as well as the public. But this last stone, with its hieroglyphs well graven on the memories to which they had been transferred, was but just placed on its height—the pyramid, when lo! in nine hours, the pyramid was as though it existed not, it remained to be regarded no more than a dust-heap; the doom of all pyramids that have tried to touch Heaven these modern times. Still, lies once imbibed by the cruel or the dull as truths—those who love them, or love not the Truth itself, soon leaven the life they entered; the poison, mixed through the whole humanity, alters its essence, even renders it, like that poison-king of old, capable of absorbing falsehood to any extent without distrust or pain. So the million—that vague term for the tares among the human wheat—began to invent theories as to Albany's career, and criticisms on his character, of their own; and not only such as live by the abominations they love, did so, but men of reputed honour, and

honesty professed. Nothing was too mean, of too creeping an insinuation, to be grafted on the real subtlety which distinguished his intelligence; no fraud too monstrous to be attributed to his yet undeveloped intention. Did he, with the oracular simplicity peculiar to great minds of large experience, utter an opinion—finite and liable to error as are all those who prophecy by *precedent*, which, in God's system, is not always a concomitant of man's—and did that opinion fail to fructify in fact, he was then a traitor to his profession, his utterance had been a designed and wilful heresy, he had but spoken to hear his own voice, to silence others less voluble, perchance less arrogant, that he might amuse himself by scattering the poor needles of his sarcasm like a sane, not a mad man, flinging fire. The most respected and venerable chronicles of the popular press originated, or issued, these tirades, pointless but lacerating like blunted weapons. Yet not one of those originators or issuers failed to gorge with curiosity unsated the daily supplies of the reporters who warmed up Albany's impertinences of the night almost before they were cold; and there was not a reader of all the myriads which pay for their

literary banquets at the rate of a penny a-day, who did not snatch the sheet (dewy from the morning press) and rend it ruthlessly open to pounce on Albany's speeches—or on his name, when it stood, as it did so often, to varnish the leader—each repetition better than a guinea to the golden editorial pocket. Nor did a noonday breakfast, on porcelain and silver, digest in any instance among those little people called the great, without the assistance of that bitter tonic, Albany's undeserved yet inevitable notoriety, administered in the morning paper. Not these strict prints alone were indebted to him for displeasing without cause, there was one organ semi-literary, and half of pseudo-art, which had been established to ridicule rather than satirise each thing and person happening to relieve the monotony or scare the propriety of the social system. This pictorial hornbook for the grown-up children, from which they learned to magnify the littlenesses of others, and scorn the greatnesses, would have been almost as forlornly circumstanced as the shadowless man, but for Albany's existence. Innumerable, infinitesimal, kaleidescopic, were the representations and misrepresentations of his person, his physiognomy, his habit, turn, or trick.

Their frequency—nay constancy of recurrence, never involved a failure of interest; unswerving, fascinated, universal, *that* at least proved one species of consistency in its victim or hero, for he was *both*.

The truth was, that the day, nay, the very hour in which Geraldine left her husband with her parents, her doctors, and her cousin Geraldi,—her husband stricken far too desperately to resist any who cared enough for his sufferings to control him, went quietly away with the only person who did so care. Lady Delucy asked no permission of his, she took him—he might have been an idiot infant, for his passivity at that moment—to her own house. And there she kept him perfectly secure in the devoted secresy,—miracle even rarer than the honour of one's friends,—of her servants, as well, of course, as that of her only child. In fact it is no truism—truth's counterfeit and foil,—to say that virtue is its own reward; not dumb and sheeplike harmlessness, misdoing never, doing good to none; but sincere and active virtue, naked truth clothed on with kindness. The servants in this lady's employ were some of them venerable and oracular gossips, the rest inexperienced and greedy ones, but all gossips. Each

and every one of them knew of Diamid's former visit, the old informed the young who had not witnessed, or rather known of them in the first instance; for the chief of them had been secretive visits, and as, of course, such persons will, they concluded them romantic and prelusive. But remembering them clearly, as such persons remember only such facts,—clearly as Elisabeth herself recalled; her own child held her not more sacred or more innocent, than in her care for Albany, they held their mistress now. But it was a mystery still, and as such appreciated, guarded from all other houses as though a hint of it might endanger the honour of that they served.

It was well for Lady Delucy and for her charge, that no eye but hers should detect the woe which had fallen on this child of superb genius and guileless heart. It was that reality of suffering which is stripped of the last rag of romance, shorn of the last ray of poetry. Despair breathed coldly on the invisible life-bleeding wounds and froze them fast; existence lay about the soul as the hard seas of the eternal ice, a monstrous desolation like the infidel's dream of death. Lady Delucy had seen the gripe of nervous torment

whose very strength imparts strength for endurance; she had watched the fever-fire lick dry the fountains of fresh health; had marked the doom of swift disease, life divided from death by a spasm, but never had she witnessed nor imagined this man's helpless and hopeless woe. If he had gone mad for awhile, or could have been influenced to sleep, she would not have endured for him such dismaying wretchedness; but neither happened; he never slumbered either day or night for weeks, nor wandered in his mind, nor lost physical constraint. Her whole nature was bent on forcing him from the subject to which he never alluded by word, yet which supplanted every other, and chained contemplation to itself. She therefore treated him as if nothing had happened, made him take her into dinner, talked to him so that, before Elisabeth and the servants, he could not but answer; and between these blissful banquets she read or played to him—even forced him to ride and drive with her. And this awful grief of his—fortunately for his character, secretly so much more sensitive than proud — never changed him outwardly; he had been worn too far—to the quick; for years inured to passion, albeit not of this form and pathos. Certainly

his hair thinned, but its texture was too fine to render this remarkable; and if its raven blackness was thwarted by a silvery thread or two, why the world said he was getting older, that a man at fifty should gracefully resign the palm of youth, and consign his last vagary to oblivion.

The lady had intended to advise his returning to face affairs and men, after the autumn-drought and winter-cold had added change to the time which is said to heal all wounds; but he anticipated her, left her abruptly, and, except in public she had never seen him since, nor had he written to her until this day, when she sat with her brightest countenance at the table whereon lay his letter, announcing his intention of visiting her the moment he should be released from his service—that is, according to immutable and glorious custom, when the bloom of summer has left the country for the year.

Now, as for Geraldine, a word or two here suffice. Of or from her, Lady Delucy had never heard—except from her servants or through the Court Chronicle, which is permitted gratis to advertise the movements of the great, that Geraldine, so far from being dead, was better, even likely to recover—unless she should risk return to a

climate less benign. Also, being a fine, but not a fashionable noble, she had neither met nor sought to meet Geraldine's parents since their return from Italy. Hearing, therefore, nothing from her or her husband, Lady Delucy concluded her to have so entirely amazed and shocked him, that he held not with her nor would allow correspondence. Understanding him little there, for Diamid with his infallible instinct, the *scent* of character, could not lose it or lay it aside for any mental or moral suffering of any degree, it being of his essence. He would rather have been annihilated—he did cut down and pluck up by its roots his pride—before he would have left his wife unnoticed, unaddressed, to any influence which might injure her or her final peace. And knowing her still tender youth, he was aware she had not yet been carried to the point of life from which we view peace of conscience as precious, even next to the repose of love. Then if he suspected not her virtue and her honour—there was one whom he suspected *of* neither—Geraldi of the fatal temperament, fatal for its owner, and fatal for those it succeeds in *possessing* with itself. So Diamid first, though privily, wrote to the physicians and parents, also at the same time a note to

Geraldi, this half-fatherly, half-fraternal, impressing on him *in* the very request that he would endeavour to console Geraldine in her husband's absence, the fact of his *own* sole right over the boy's cousin. On receiving favorable accounts from the two first, no answer from the last, he wrote to Geraldine herself, kindly but not ardently, and invited her to write to him when she could—was strong enough, that is—without alluding to, or allowing in his style, the cause of separation. Geraldine neither answered that letter nor Geraldi for her, nor any of his succeeding letters, regular as the mails themselves; still he wrote, and took care to ascertain through her grandmother, that Geraldine duly received his communications. That great old lady, who had disliked the marriage, replied to his inquiries as coolly as was consistent with respect for her own side of the connection; and this negative insult, so bitter to one of his blood, he had in addition to endure. So among all others, his affairs stood now.

The romance of life, which struck Lady Delucy as so real and evident, was not only derived from her inward contemplation of the tragedy of a single heart, but also from the impression sudden

and more startling of another passion crowned. Besides the letter from Albany on her table, lay there a pile of foreign newspapers, and another letter, from a former friend of hers, an actress then, now married and living with her husband in a lovely villa, on the near borders of that very earthly paradise which to Rodomant had seemed the promised land. She had but glanced through that letter and the papers, after breaking Diamid's seal: his words perused and reperused, she returned to the former again; and was reading them still when Elisabeth came into the room, and gave her mother one eager intense look before her entrance was even realised.

"Is that you dearest?" asked Lady Delucy, the moment she became conscious of Elisabeth's still presence—still as her step. Then before her daughter could reply, she went on, as one forced to carelessness by great anxiety. "I am so grieved, so disappointed, that we have no letter from Charles, though the mail is in. But it must not make us too apprehensive, for his is not a lady's pen, and you heard last mail."

"Oh," answered Elisabeth, quietly, "the mail is in; we must wait for the next I suppose. Have you looked at the papers?"

"Not the *every* day papers, but something better, a parcel from the Condessa Azulejo, after going through which, I am so elevated that I feel as one in a balloon; I can never condescend to the *Times* this day. Truly history is stranger than story."

"My dear mother, pray enlighten me," asked Elisabeth, in a tone of desperate interest, sitting down behind her mother's chair, and seeming to see over her shoulder.

"Read, or shall I?"

"Oh, mamma, pray, you,—that print so dazzles my eyes, really, the ink is but a shade darker than the paper."

"And the paper a conglomerate of bank notes. Nevertheless, as good ink and paper as Charles uses; I wonder what he did with the immense quantity of both, which I packed for him."

"Gave it to his men who wanted to write to their wives," in a tone of jest, yet containing fact, still with that extreme quietude which was not so remarkable in Elisabeth as an excited mood had been, and which did not strike her mother as being, though it was, under even her average of calm. So Lady Delucy read, in the rich word-music of Belvidere, an account, special and minute in degrees most unusual, or rather quite

exceptional, with the revelations of its press; in fact, a full, though compressed narrative of Herman Rodomant. It was stated that it had been drawn up to satisfy the demands of a universal and ardent curiosity, concerning, said the writer, that sovereign genius, and first of modern artists, and care had been taken to gather from himself alone the circumstances of his earlier history and career at its commencement. "And, added Lady Delucy, "I must say for him, that though he disappointed me, he had deceived no one else, only leading facts are given, and each is correct. Fancy, Elisabeth, their fancying they could make Rodomant reveal his inner life. I am glad he has not done so, his reserve is intact; but there is just what he told me himself, his boyhood and youth, his meeting us; he has been generous enough to insert the story of Alarcos, and obstinate enough to give our name, which, for a wonder, they have spelt right. But what follows is amazing to me, for I never fancied genius to be a goose with golden eggs. Yet he had crept into the golden centre of power, fashion, and pride—the very life-speck of that tiny world of Brobdignagian dignities. Settled in the very palace, glove in glove with the prince;

and the princess—that surprises me most of all—has constituted him her cabinet musician; that alone a great salary I know, for I remember the condessa saying how she grudged it."

True, that the princess grudged giving a great salary to the musicians, over-paid already by her father—for sycophancies rather than art-services which mocked the name—as, to use again the inevitable art-slang, Rodomant was the first classician ever accepted in the offices he held. The princess had grudged throwing money to the rich and incompetent, while so many desolate and hungry souls crowded in vaults and dungeons under the pavement of her father's capital. But Lady Delucy knew as little of the foreign royal woman as women in this country generally know of their alien sisters—a cosmopolitan in the gender feminine perhaps exists not—quite a right and natural deficiency, if woman should be exclusively domestic.

"Then," added the lady, "he is also cabinet composer to the prince, pianist, organist, director, and editor—what means that?—of the prince's operas; and they have given him—oh! I cannot count the orders. I never could have believed Rodomant would wear orders." Nor did he.

"What is inexplicable, and I fancy a *catch-franco* fit, is that they assert he was introduced at the Belviderian court by that nondescript adventurer, Porphyro. That I *cannot* believe—the court is sewn up and chained down with precedent—haughtiness is a disease with it. And Porphyro is not only no one, but is a vulgarian neuter; never beheld I a man with so commonplace a countenance. I saw him in London, at a play which he no more seemed affected by than if he had been stone-blind and deaf. But never mind about the introduction, Rodomant is *there* and there seems nothing more for him to do but sit still and write. What quantities he has written—how was it all put down?—these endless sonatas, his own original idea, his initial—how divine the first one was! A list of his compositions for the church—alas! he has ratted to the Catholics—a new mass once a month, pretty well. Songs, not so many of them as formerly; I am glad of it, his princedom is orchestra. Last, and best, his new opera. Worst for us, though, as we can neither see nor hear it till the prince chooses to let it breathe beyond his own theatre. He will not even grant it to his subjects, except the court. And in another part of the paper they crush him

with flatteries, smother him with incense—the prince I mean. And what horrors I read of him in our *Times* yesterday." At this point the lady made a long pause. Elisabeth desperately again put in;—

"I cannot fancy how Rodomant would get on in such a court as that, with its absurd and awful etiquettes. I should have thought he would have been beheaded after his first bow, if he made one, so sure he would be to do it against the etiquettes, of which there are so many for the simplest action."

"A series of masks shifted every moment. There are two ways of contriving to prolong existence in such a case; either to fulfil each letter of etiquette, exaggerate every conservative cipher, or to let both alone altogether, to fulfil *none*. Few can do this, if not gracefully, even successfully; but I fancy Rodomant to be just the one. And for his punishment—they would consider a *musician*, of whatever caste, too insignificant to punish, unless his crime were capital; for instance, to attempt the life of the prince, or brush the dress of his daughter. Then with all his eccentricity, Rodomant is faultlessly well-bred, his roughnesses are those of the uncut diamond or the quartz sparkling with its gold."

"He is restored to your favour then, mamma?"

"He never lost it, my love. It was only my passion for candour that he pained."

But the very fact that he had not ceased to interest her proved she did not really believe he had deceived her meaningly—yet she was not aware of this latter fact.

"The dazzling description has put something aside I wanted to tell you. Diamid is coming to stay *here*, in our house, not his own, next month."

No hesitation on her own part now, nor suspicious glance on Elisabeth's; with the death of her life's long dream her daughter's idea of its existence had also died naturally. No love, save mutual love, endures the test of time—how much less expands into the soul's eternity!

CHAPTER X.

"I AM VERY glad," said Elisabeth, with the first *real* interest she had felt, though shown not so desperately as the false. Her mother, having read her news till they were doomed waste paper, now turned to look at her daughter, for the first time wondering why she sat behind her rather than at her side. Had she looked but an instant earlier, she would have seen Elisabeth paler than ever in her severest spells of delicacy. *Now* she had never beheld her crimsoned with so warm a blush. And the mother, who knew not that the daughter's old suspicion had died, thought her child was blushing for her ;—no need to make a boast of natural instinct or acquired penetration, when self-consciousness, finer than both their

influences, so often causes them to err. Elisabeth saw this, more acutely sensitive to all impressions which fell on her that morning than ever in her life before. And the pleasure she expressed in Albany's announced visit was more than twice as deeply felt. Strange and spiritual, when most terrible, are the crises of passion, of which some experiences count only one, some many, but *all* only one supreme. Elisabeth's had arrived this day.

It has been said accurately, if not logically, that parents should not watch too closely, that is openly, for the child's cognizance, its health; that such a habit entails almost invariable depression of the system, self-detected in the requisition for anxiety. It is quite as true that a parent should not too curiously pry into the progress of the moral life, how strictly soever he or she should induct the child into the rules which make goodness beauty. And it is certain that parents who exert, in either case, such overvigilance, succeed far less in winning filial confidence than those parents whose devotion is at once more impulsive and discreet. Lady Delucy had the maternal instinct in its perfection, but the only child who came to claim it was the offspring of a

husband she had not loved; therefore her maternal instinct, except for the cradle-hours, was of no actual use. This mother loved her daughter as she deserved, but understood her not, for she had understood her child's father without loving him. Did we choose to examine secret facts which reveal themselves for those who take the pains to search, we should find inevitably, perhaps without exception, retribution weighed in the balances with desert, the scales equal—side by side.

Whether Lady Delucy was right in forbidding her daughter to marry and go to India in her first youth, because of delicate health, may be questioned. She meant to be; but the higher wisdom wanting, blind instinct acted in the dark, and failed. She employed not her intellect to decide, knowing not that it was her duty to call it into requisition for judgment between her own child and other girls of tender age and health. She little dreamed, though she ought to have known, that for Elisabeth suspense and separation from her lover were infinitely more wearing, and likely to decrease her strength, than the most ruthless hardihood imposed upon the wife of a soldier of Charles Lyonhart's rank; nor that such

a position, under protection of the trusted of her soul, would brace her being into something more heroic than physical athletism. Also the mother forgot, or did not learn, that the strongest constitutions are often soonest stricken beneath a stress of climate.

Little guessed the mother—blind instinct at fault again—the cause of the child's desperate interest—feigned sudden from uninterest below zero—her unseen paleness, witnessed blush, energy of approbation. Elisabeth had the love for her lover which is loveliest unseen—except by him. He alone treads the path to knowledge of her character, he only wings his longings to her heart—perhaps he alone and only cares to know and love her. Her mother had never comprehended her daughter's first and solitary passion for the young soldier, for the humanly selfish reason that she would never have loved him herself. But she never refused Elisabeth anything, except what she believed would do her harm ; and there really was no stain upon scutcheon or character of Lyonhart, both were blazoned on a fair face—honour and innocence. So, as a natural consequence, Elisabeth exulted in that non-appreciation of him who was to her

so infinitely precious, she possessed him only, not only to love but to admire; he was her heroic ideal, as well as the darling of her heart; when he was with her, her life lacked nothing. But when he went, Elisabeth, actually, though the notion by the greatly knowing may be scorned, might have claimed the crown of martyrdom more justly than many of those who are therewith invested by their fellow-men. Her soul's light darkened drearily as twilight under cloud, no moon behind it—at last went out in her. Her heart's happiness flagged pulse by pulse, then stopped; she was bewildered in the impenetrable loneliness, appalled at its mysterious blank, yet remained as calm and natural of demeanour, as though all light and gladness kept *peace* within. And a source of trouble was hers, which those women who love men of her lover's type can only understand, for it is reserved for them alone. He, worse off if possible than she, he who had nearly choked himself with swallowing strong tears for more than a month after their farewell, and whose solitary great passion mastered him not, only because its mistress so gentle and so tender might require in its future an indomitable support—he could not, unhappily for himself, more

unhappily for her, express himself in words, especially in writing. His letters to Elisabeth nearly maddened her, not that they were few—he wrote by every mail—but they were brief as his orders to his men, and as to the likelihood of his confiding his sweet feelings to the winds and waves, he would as soon have so perilled Elisabeth. He had the quality which forces all the martial qualities to cohere—endurance to a fault, or rather in virtuous excess; so he never complained—he hoped, perhaps longed, but never hinted at nor acknowledged faith's deep yearning. He had besides had to experience what a mind of his cast dreads more than danger in full encounter—idleness, the still life of the soldier. His regiment, summoned suddenly to a spot far in the burning land, where mutinous premonitions had aroused the suspicions of the lion of the north, arrived there when they were for a while hushed utterly, as prophecies before fulfilment; there was in fact a dead lull—save for parade, play, and sleep, life would have been a waking dream. Lyonhart was chafed by this quiescent inutility, as few among his equals or inferiors in the ranks, as, unfortunately for his enjoyment, how happily soever for his rectitude so dear to him, he had

not the slightest pleasure in common-place recreations, nor in dissipations commoner or lower yet. Neither could he study; practical warfare was his brain's one theory, science, and pre-occupation. Elisabeth's letters were indeed as draughts of fresh water sweetened with nectar for the spirit in his desert; but it is as sad a truth as tender, that, for every token of *earthly* love received, one looks and asks for more; yet those letters he wore next his heart by day, and they softened his pillow at night.

As Lady Delucy imagined, the mail for the first time that morning had brought Elisabeth no letter. Now, had it not been for Rodomant, Lady Delucy would have rummaged the English as well as foreign news, for political or personal hints of Diamid Albany, also for affairs of India. The day before she had noticed the telegram that the mail was in; she therefore expected letters this day, and to her apprehension there were none. Now by the magnetic prescience which, instead of being blind like instinct, sees without eyes, Elisabeth had dreamed horrid dreams all through that night of expectation—dreams "confused" as that arch-epithet for every battle of the warrior, "rolled in blood." So, waking hot and

feverish, the fever made her strong; at six o'clock she rose—a feat she had never executed in her existence—and walked to the post-house, just a mile beyond the park; there she received her letter; so happened it that none went to Northeden in the bag. As she turned to go home, she tore it open; her fears were scattered by a worse reality. Mutiny, sudden as hurricane, and as strong: Lyonhart's regiment, the only one at the station which was the centre of the mortal agitation—three regiments having left it the week before for positions that seemed less safe and peaceful. No dream was it, therefore, that now he was in strict sense a warrior, pressed on, urged forward by dangers which, to her heart, more than her imagination, seemed a million inevitable deaths. Now came the crisis which crushed her woman's weakness under the will of love—strong, determinate, less passionate than loving now. Loving him alone, loved and needed supremely by him only, her way was towards him; it lay vivid to her apprehension as one line of moonlight stretching across a trackless sea, yet cast from a moonless sky—all dark on earth and in heaven besides. Thought, whose steps are swifter than the electric wings; fancy, more

instant than the opening and shutting of the lightning's eye, already swept her soul to the embrace of his; but the body, useless without the soul, yet needful to it, must follow too. Therefore, calmly as quickly she walked home —was not fatigued, because she felt not so— calmly more than all through her quiet life, she sought her mother's side; resolved, strong, secretive, as is nothing—no being—like a woman in her love and love's intention. She went to her mother, not to bid her listen to her love's intention, nor to soften the bitterness of parting for either of them by one embrace to be remembered; only to search for the official announcement of the outbreak mentioned in her letter, as though the news were too terrible to be truth unless in print. She took up the paper, even while her mother was speaking; yet heard all her mother said through all, and answered. There stood the crushing capitals—The Indian Carnage—war in the province which contained her world and hope. Alas! for the loving ones of all the many, whose hearts go out of them towards that far country! When her mother, at last, had finished speaking (she conscientiously stood still till then) Elisabeth went away, carrying the

paper with her. Her mother began to write a long letter to Diamid Albany; her daughter went straight to her own room, there to take the first step of the path shining clearly before her—out, out, out! till she fell upon his neck, or took him to her bosom. There had not been the deliberation of the twinkling of an eye, not a self-questioning spoken in a single breath, nor hesitant dread dispersed in one short sigh; the birth of her decision was immediate, and it was born full-grown. This was, of course, to leave England; to go straight, or crooked, any way the shortest, to India—and to go alone; this girl who had never taken an airing in a private carriage without her mother, and whose whole knowledge of the chances and certain fatigues of travel was an ideal one—therefore, of positive dis-service. To do her justice, it was no sickly or romantic notion of concealment from her mother which made her resolve to go alone and independently, though her project seemed glorious in its very terror, from the anticipation of such solitary devotion; but she had a peculiar pride, rarely shown, and almost as seldom roused. She knew her mother cared as little as possible for her future son, as one of so

warm a heart and instinctive a conscience could, and she did not, actually, feel justified in exposing her mother to exile from a genial home and country clear of peril. At all events, her mind made up, nothing in heaven or earth could change her course, or retard its progress one unnecessary moment; for she thought not of death—that seemed annihilated for *her*, nor of the possible event of illness—that she would not *acknowledge*, if it chanced. This very determination on her part resulted from a like ignorance of her mother to that mother's ignorance of her. Both sprung from the same deep unimagined cause. Their constant love, and untiring mutual confidence, *when* there were no secrets to confide, had been more like the endeared habit of faithful and fondest friendship, into which the filial *feeling*—not the instinct, that remained intact, only in the dark—had passed with the passing of infancy, as the blind maternal one had done. Therefore, fond and faithful as these two hearts were, they perpetually erred as to each other's minds and motives; not so as to disappoint affection, only to baffle the wisdom which to nature belongs *by* nature, as much as love.

Elisabeth, with her heart strung to a pitch of

heroism the world would have called quixotic, determined not to take her maid, *because* that person was a member of her mother's household. As to money, she always had more than she could possibly spend, for her mother could not bear her either to want means or to have to ask for them. Also, though she was not of age, she felt clearly that the money was her own. As for her mother's innumerable presents, and her trinkets, heaps of vanity as she termed them, lying drug-like in the drawers and boxes—those being drugs, also *not* clearly her own, she left behind. Sewing banknotes into every available corner of her raiment, and dressing herself in the style now adopted universally by women highly-bred, for country walking—stout slips, thick boots, brown hats, and robes of dust-colour—she went down to luncheon. Seeing her so dressed, her mother naturally enquired was she going to take a long ramble? and, quite conscientiously, Elisabeth could answer, yes. Lady Delucy was enchanted; seldom, indeed, since her escort had left England, had Elisabeth gone beyond the park; and her mother, like all mothers, considered the will and power to effect a long walk, as a proof of health's maximum in her offspring. So, directly after

luncheon—she was prudent enough to eat a good one—Elisabeth crossed the park by the shortest cut, and went across the field-paths between the hedges, to the station. By the officials planted on the platform she was known and noticed, in their vacuum of conversational topics; yet though they had never espied her walking or alone before, they concluded she might be going to the next station only. Not so however, when she produced her ticket—but then it was too late for their regard or remonstrance, for she would not get into the train until it was on the point of starting. So, locked into the coupé of an express, which half-carriage she had to herself, she went to London. Safe in all respects she knew herself to be, because her mother would not miss nor inquire about her till dinner-time, before which hour she was in town. Her absolute inexperience saved her from the shadow of an alarm, which so often produces misadventure; and before she went on further, *now* unknown, unnoticed in the everlasting crowd, she sent a telegram to Northeden, to be forwarded on to her mother, simply announcing that she was safe and well, and would write the next day herself, explaining all. For her strong excitement in behalf of Lyonhart

rendered her so cold to all impression else, that it never struck her her mother could be anxious, knowing her safe and well—never flitted across her fancy that it was possible her mother would misinterpret her words, or doubt her intention, and her deeds. Still throughout this calm of confidence, prudence lurked under love, concealed, but acted indirectly, else Elisabeth need not have walked—or rather been swept by the crowd off the platform—nor have walked on afterwards some distance, instead of stepping into one of the conveyances, which are patent to detectives at the station.

When Elisabeth's maid knocked at her mother's door at dressing time to enquire whether her young lady were closeted there, as chanced so often, Lady Delucy was astonished, not yet alarmed—the message had not reached her. And though surprised, she soon sank into self-congratulation on her daughter's rallying powers of volition and of limb. Then, she might have gone to see the new church rising in mediæval proportions for the next hamlet; in such case she had doubtless rested under some little homestead or roof-bush; all such for miles and miles recognised the mother and daughter. It was still

warm and light. But scarcely more than cool if balmy twilight when, after waiting for her an hour, the mother realised something beyond the fact that the child was long and late—namely, that she herself was anxious and stricken sudden with presentiment. Through the thick mist of apprehension concealing the actual presage, struck clear as lightning the fact upon the conscience. "Never should I have allowed her to go alone." All the servants were called up, each one despatched in a different direction, this to one village, that to another, a third to the canal, a fourth to the chalk-pit, a fifth and sixth to the railway station, and the inn where yet loomed coach-house-niched, a statue or two of grand post-chaises. For the rest, they went all ways unlikely, as the first set had taken every likely path, all except one, the oldest—he who had been so scared at Rodomant on his first appearance; and he was ordered to keep watch at the door to catch the first gleam of the missing one's return, as she might enter the gates of the lodge. Yet there was a fear additional dropped on the mother's heart by the fact, soon ascertained, that by the lodge gates Elisabeth had *not* passed out.

The mother, in the rosy deepening dusk, walked

wildly up and down the hall—whatever her suspense, its first phase was not prolonged. About ten minutes passed, when she heard a cry, turned, as she had her back to the door, and saw the old man rushing down the steps. Far swifter of foot and yearning than himself, she overtook him, expecting to have Elisabeth in her arms. Nothing, nothing, except a strip of white paper, waved by a stout horseman's arm. The message! She guessed it, snatched at it, and with poring eyes, detected the meaning at a glance for all the official scrawl. What had been indited in perfect innocence, was too innocent to *seem* so. Lady Delucy was transfixed at once through her mother's and her woman's heart with an anguish sharper than the trouble of her love. Through her mother's heart, with a stinging sense of the child's ingratitude, through her woman's, with a naked and remorseless pang—had the child forsworn the names which are the crown of woman, constancy and honour in her affiance? Said the old servant, sorrowfully, for through his vision, dimmed at once with age and tears, he detected the double-edged woe which wounded the woman and the mother; "My young lady has gone *alone*, no one stood to meet her at the station." But

ignorance handles consolation so that it shall more hurt than heal. Worst of all, to go *alone*. For what motive? none that could serve her to *remain* alone, she must be alone no longer now—alas, with whom? No reclamation, not even hope of any further intelligence until the morrow—the mother chained to the rock of hard reality, the fetters rivetted by the child's own hand. Standing, rooted by her suspense, under the old trees in the evening, the mother went back through life in a blaze of recollection, just as those describe, who are, or are on the point of, perishing by shipwreck, or fire, or other death clad in sudden and strong calamity. In that full light—cruelly brilliant, horribly intense—every fact, event, and incident, each item of circumstance, of which it took hundreds to make up one memory wherein her child was concerned, or she concerned with her child, the mother surveyed, her natural lucidity of brain and tranquil temperament serving to make the pain more present, the terror more distinct. Yet, when she tried in all this glitter and atmosphere of remembrance to fix on one point which should either explain or palliate the blame of that hour; when she tried to perceive whether it was mutual or single, she became as it were blind. Yet one

sad certainty seemed clear, that Elisabeth's calm and reticence of conduct, through all the months since she parted with her lover, had been not assumed—no veil to cloak her passion or her suspense in separation; they had been simple, real indications of honest—no, dishonest—but real indifference. And at thought of the hypocrisy which her child must have played out in presence of her lover, the mother grew sick; the stain upon the woman's living name smirched the scutcheon of the buried father. Last of all, ignorant and unenquiring, as all are of that subject, at once the simplest and the most inscrutable, the mother neither recognized nor suspected the true cause of her child's unchild-like, or her own un-maternal conduct—the cause which alienates the child from the parent, renders the parent unjust to the child—a marriage not made in heaven.

While Lady Delucy still stood under the trees her old servant came again; again brought word fresh-gathered from the people at the station, that Elisabeth had not only gone without a gentleman, but without luggage, even a single packet. This seemed to seal the fact that some one she *must* have met, for the mother knew the

child's luxurious necessities and habits; long and long must the influence have been at work to persuade her, not only to leave her home, her mother, her lover's soul in absence, but to leave them positively to run in debt to another, not only for luxury, but for necessity—for the commonplace protection which the false husband never extends—or with exceptions an age apart; the protection of home, property, every personal attribute on his part, extending over the simple unembarrassed self of the woman given up to him. In vain now for the old servant to linger, with liberty unprecedented, taking leave to point out the mercies of the dispensation—how, as the young lady had gone alone, without gentleman or luggage, it could be nothing to hurt the feelings of the colonel. How she *must* have gone to my lady's town-house,—perhaps the colonel had arrived there, and had sent *her* a letter by the telegraph. This last hint did really seem worth acting on. Instantly a message was despatched to the town-house—despatched by Lady Delucy her very self, and she waited in her carriage for the reply. It came through the housekeeper, formal in the midst of its surprise—dead respectful; oh, the ice-daggers of conventionalism, when

they strike through the fire of that slowest of the purifiers—suspense. Elisabeth had neither been seen nor heard of in her only London home. This last chance spent, Lady Delucy had actually, not fictively, to sit still. If she went anywhere she might miss the letter, if she became overwrought to illness she might become useless if required to move afterwards; there was nothing to be *done*, as in the case of sudden death, an accident, or a chaise and four to Gretna. She sat up all night, a feat her even health and unstrained nerves permitted; by very bright lights thrice in the night she wrote to Lyonhart, and thrice burned them, for the simple reason that, beyond the fact of her wild anxiety, she had nothing to *assert*. At morning, whose first blue glimmer had seemed to her watchful eyes a sign of hope, no hope came, no letter, therefore, from London, none that day. Then, and only then, the fact returned on her, that Elisabeth had said she would *write* that day, so that a letter, if written, could not reach her till the morrow, and might not then. So she had still to rest and wait in the suspense of unknown calamity; since the old days of her youth, when revilers had persecuted her own innocence, she had known no such bit-

terness—that had been but as a foretaste, in one drop, of the full draught forced upon her now.

Meantime Elisabeth, quite at ease in conscience, was too ardently and minutely occupied to reflect a single moment *backwards*, as it were; her one fear yet lingered, that it was possible her mother might guess whither she had gone and her design—and, natural result of her solicitude—desire to accompany her daughter. The fear even touched on terror of detention, of recall, or of parental command such as never had issued from lips whose authority, even in this instance, Elisabeth preferred to ignore rather than resist. That fear, this shade of terror, she endeavoured to annihilate in her energetic pre-occupation, fully required indeed, if she were to set forth that fortnight. And delicate nerves, never yet strained upon, will seem to carry youth and love through exploit and adventure—fatigue, even such as strong nerves shattered can only shrink from in despair—even at their contemplation. First, knowing that no business transactions take place after the dinner hour of official gentlemen, she drove to a hotel—the only one she knew, where she had occasionally passed an hour or two in visiting friends of her mother who just lighted

on London for a day or two, and had taken wing again. None knew her—the human Nile was too full, too strong, and too incessantly renewed, not to cover perfectly her name and character. That evening, through the agency of the landlady, stirred up at once by curiosity and a boon as hard as it was sweet—a gift in money of course, Elisabeth was too ignorant to invent a less suspicious bribe—that very night she possessed a maid, or rather a waiting-woman, of middle age, for it had suddenly struck the maiden, the moment she realised the bare fact that she must face men in her arrangements, that it would be more agreeable and more due to her mother's child, to have a companion somewhat older than herself. As for her own rank, she eschewed her title—that of her mother also—as particularly dangerous, and called herself, a style quakeresque which never struck her on its assumption — Elisabeth Home. But this style served her somewhat less than a lady's ordinary one in mid-society, the unfailing Miss, to secure her ordinary attentions on the part of her new retainer. Extraordinary ones it certainly bestowed on her—that person, whether accustomed to the sphere of the toilette, the study-nursery, or the humble-companionship to

the arrogant-in-little, undertook and commenced to carry forth the operations of all three, and demanded—clear-seeing that she might obtain—wages embracing the triple salary of such. In the morning she dressed Elisabeth, but at the same time asserted there was no time for dressing hair, so cleverly concealing her ignorance of any patent process; she also instructed—that part of her extemporaneous duty was so acceptable to her employer that its impropriety escaped detection—she instructed, or rather ordered, Elisabeth where to go for her outfit, (her own also) and how to procure the swiftest passage—overland of course. Besides handling and dictation, she held fast on her mistress—the companion either rose to the employer, or the employer sank to the level of the companion. Side by side, seat by seat, *not* arm in arm—because some instinct upheld Elisabeth in the determination to keep her mud-coloured robe out of the mud—they went about all day. In cabs and out of cabs, over city-stones, which for her previous experience might have remained mythic golden ones, in the depths of those west end marts of universally adapted clothing, which make one realise the census better than all its figures, Elisabeth was

accompanied by the leech-like liege, her sovereign servant. By night, her departure was arranged; she had intended it should have been actively begun, but was consoled by the fact placed before her that day, that had she been in town only twelve hours later, she could not have departed for fourteen days. Remembering her word to her mother, she wrote a line, or rather two lines this time, still saying she was safe, well, and would write on the morrow, concluding with love this time. Of course, the note, despatched by the night-post, and reaching Northeden duly, gave much more pain than pleasure, and the conclusion seemed a mockery on the child's part; that day the mother wept, which she had not allowed herself to do before. While she was weeping, alone of course, Elisabeth rather worse off, now all was settled, than *if* alone, was on the Southampton line: that afternoon she was on board a vessel for Alexandria; she aspired that evening to be gone; but no, it was Sunday, and the steamer sailed not till one o'clock next day. Fearfully, while waiting, did the sense of hope decline to that of weariness—a Sabbath so weary seemed to extinguish even the hope of rest, or wish for it; a longing for excitement, continuous, buoyant, even of danger to be

faced, rather than the sick thought of rest—possessed her. The two places taken had been the last, therefore, though overpaid for, were quite the worst; and this daughter of luxury, as well as rest, had no idea how much of her discomfort and dis-spirit arose from facts, bare, modern, and nauseous-smelling facts around her. However, one advantage sprang from this drear annoyance; she had time to write *fully* to her mother, and she did so, for the first time unveiling her whole mind, as well as outpouring her heart, a blessing for her mother, without which she might, perhaps, never have rallied to her nature's complete healthfulness. The long Sunday night spent, the dawn fully brightened; the vessel filled like an immense beehive; every cell had its inmate, and, as it *seemed*, there was a crowd on deck to whom no cells were portioned. At twelve o'clock the last farewells were breathed from lip to lip, the last letters carried on shore—Elisabeth's with the rest—safe in its direction now. And to that address, spied by her hireling, she perhaps owed that she was not maltreated or despoiled beyond all remedy, before she reached the desert.

Never fell a shock more sharp and sudden on a mother's nature than this letter—sudden be-

cause utterly a surprise as to its contents, sharp in the excessive revulsion of the blow, which at once annihilating any *fault* or imprudence of the child in the eyes of the mother, flung the whole weight of blame back on herself. Once certain that her daughter was faithful in her life's affiance, no other charge signified, nor could exist, least of all that of ingratitude to her mother; this mood's re-action well exhibiting the enthusiasm which had lingered beyond youth—a youth to the life's end. Of course this enthusiasm also lent impulse to conviction; there was but one course—to follow instantly—if not to reach her at the first or second stages, which might be possible—yet to be constantly so near behind her, that they should meet almost instantly in India's capital. After all, the worst part of the journey was after *that* point, and by her intimate acquaintance with various persons of position in Calcutta—through her husband—she hoped at least to lodge a message for her daughter in that place, which should detain her there in waiting for her mother.

Happily for Lady Delucy, she was a favourite through her young unmarried character, as well as her married rank, with an old nobleman of

dilletantesque marine taste—perhaps the most unusual—as the freshwater mania is one of the most common. He was possessed of a steam-craft of exquisite beauty, the size of the largest yacht; this sea-bird flew on canvass-wings besides steam. In it the owner had voyaged, across the great mild ocean, to South Australia; it was, therefore, well tested as well-tempered. Fortunately for Lady Delucy, it was lying now at sabbath in a fairy bay of Wight; thither she went instantly, or rather to the owner's dwelling, overlooking the blue sea and the brooding "Halcyon." In such a cause she hesitated not to request its loan; engaging and determined to fit it for instant voyage herself. The request was granted—not easily though—for the owner expressed conscientious scruples about such a vessel in such a voyage, as short and difficult as the antipodal one had been long and safe. But the mother conquered; in a few hours the yacht was manned, provisioned, commanded, and poised for flight—her speed justified the term. The owner led the lady on board, and bade her God-speed; would fain have accompanied her, but that his escort was determinately rejected. Just as they stood together to say farewell, the captain leapt on board; late, to the lady's impatient

fancy, and, in fact, retarded by a sudden rumour brushing past his ear on shore—a rumour which those who stayed at home soon learned as real. A revolution burst out in Parisinia—the king of Iris, for life's sake eschewing etiquette—(of course escaping Britain-wards) had reached the English shore.

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